THE BOOK ON MEDIUMS

A Guide For Mediums and Invocators

ALLAN KARDEC

Table of Contents

Title
Copyright
Contents
Translator’s Preface
Introduction
PART ONE: PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS
CHAPTER 1: Do Spirits Exist?
CHAPTER 2: The Marvelous And The Supernatural
CHAPTER 3: Methodology And Process
CHAPTER 4: Theories
PART TWO: SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS
CHAPTER 1: Action Of Spirits On Matter
CHAPTER 2: Physical Manifestations – Table Turning
CHAPTER 3: Intelligent Manifestations
CHAPTER 4: Theory of Physical Manifestations
CHAPTER 5: Spontaneous Physical Manifestations
CHAPTER 6: Visual Manifestations
CHAPTER 7: Bi-Corporeity and Transfiguration
CHAPTER 8: Laboratory of the Invisible World
CHAPTER 9: Haunted Places
CHAPTER 10: Nature of Spirit Communications
CHAPTER 11: Sematology and Typtology
CHAPTER 12: Pneumatography or Direct Writing – Pneumatophony or Direct Spirit-Sounds
CHAPTER 13: Psychography
CHAPTER 14: Mediums
CHAPTER 15: Writing Mediums
CHAPTER 16: Special Mediums
CHAPTER 17: Formation of Mediums
CHAPTER 18: Difficulties and Dangers of Mediumship
CHAPTER 19: The Role of the Medium in Spirit Communication
CHAPTER 20: Mental and Moral Influence of the Medium
CHAPTER 21: Influence of Surroundings on Spirit-Manifestations
CHAPTER 22: Mediumship of Animals
CHAPTER 23: Obsession
CHAPTER 24: Identity of Spirits
CHAPTER 25: Evocations
CHAPTER 26: Questions That May Be Addressed to Spirits
CHAPTER 27: Contradictions and Hoaxes
CHAPTER 28: Charlatans
CHAPTER 29: Spiritist Meetings and Societies

CHAPTER 30: Parisian Society for Psychologic Studies
CHAPTER 31: Dissertations by Spirits
CHAPTER 32: Spirit Glossary
Paperbacks also available from White Crow Books

THE BOOK ON MEDIUMS

A GUIDE FOR MEDIUMS AND INVOCATORS

By Allan Kardec

The Book on Mediums
White Crow Books is an imprint of
White Crow Productions Ltd
PO Box 1013
Guildford
GU1 9EJ
www.whitecrowbooks.com
This edition copyright © 2010 White Crow Books
All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction, in any manner, is prohibited.
Text design and eBook production by Essential Works
www.essentialworks.co.uk
Hardback ISBN 978-1-907661-77-8
Paperback ISBN 978-1-907661-75-4
eBook ISBN 978-1-907661-76-1
BODY, MIND & SPIRIT / Parapsychology / ESP
Distributed in the UK by
Lightning Source Ltd.
Chapter House
Pitfield
Kiln Farm
Milton Keynes MK11 3LW
Distributed in the USA by
Lightning Source Inc.
246 Heil Quaker Boulevard
LaVergne
Tennessee 37086

Contents

Translator's Preface
Introduction
PART ONE: PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS
CHAPTER 1: DO SPIRITS EXIST?
CHAPTER 2: THE MARVELOUS AND THE SUPERNATURAL
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS
Materialists – Extreme Materialists – Materialists from lack of any better hypothesis – Skeptics from ignorance, from ill-will, from self-interest, from dishonesty, from pusillanimity (spiritual cowardice) from religious scruples, from hoaxes – Three classes of Spiritists – Experimental Spiritists – Imperfect Spiritists – Christian or True Spiritists – Order of studies in the investigation of Spiritism.
CHAPTER 4: THEORIES
Different opinions in regard to Spiritism – Theories of Negation – Charlatanism – Madness – Hallucination – Cracking Muscles; Physical Causes – Reflection or Cerebration – Affirmative Theories – The Collective Soul – Sleepwalkers – Pessimists – The Diabolical or Demoniacal – Optimists – Non Spiritists or Mono-Spiritists – Multi-Spiritists or Poly-Spiritists – Theory of the Material Soul.
PART TWO: SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS
CHAPTER 1: ACTION OF SPIRITS ON MATTER
CHAPTER 2: PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS – TABLE TURNING
CHAPTER 3: INTELLIGENT MANIFESTATIONS
CHAPTER 4: THEORY OF PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS
Movements and levitations – Sounds – Temporary increase and decrease of the weight of bodies.
CHAPTER 5: SPONTANEOUS PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS
Noises, racket, and disturbances – Things thrown about – Objects introduced spontaneously into rooms – Statements by a Spirit in regard to these phenomena.
CHAPTER 6: VISUAL MANIFESTATIONS
Theoretical explanation of Apparitions – Theory of Hallucination.
CHAPTER 7: BI-CORPOREITY AND TRANSFIGURATION
Apparitions of the spirit of people in the flesh – Doubles – Saint Alfonso of Liguori and Saint Antony of Padua – Vespasian – Transfiguration – Invisibility.
CHAPTER 8: LABORATORY OF THE INVISIBLE WORLD
Spirit-clothing – Spontaneous formation of tangible objects – Modification of the properties of the matter – Curative action of animal magnetism.
CHAPTER 9: HAUNTED PLACES
CHAPTER 10: NATURE OF SPIRIT COMMUNICATIONS
Coarse – frivolous – serious – instructive communications.
CHAPTER 11: SEMATOLOGY AND TYPTOLOGY

The language of signs – raps and tilting – Alphabetical typtology.
CHAPTER 12: PNEUMATOGRAPHY OR DIRECT WRITING – PNEUMATOPHONY OR DIRECT SPIRIT-SOUNDS
CHAPTER 13: PSYCHOGRAPHY
Indirect Psychography: Planchettes, etc. – Direct or Manual Psychography.
CHAPTER 14: MEDIUMS
Physical Mediums – Sensitive or Impressionable Mediums – Clairaudient Mediums – Trance Mediums – Clairvoyant Mediums – Sleepwalking Mediums – Healing Mediums – Automatic Writing.
CHAPTER 15: WRITING MEDIUMS
Mechanical Mediums – Intuitive Mediums – Semi-Mechanical Mediums – Inspired or Involuntary Mediums – Presentient Mediums.
CHAPTER 16: SPECIAL MEDIUMS
Special aptitudes of Mediums – Synoptic table of the different varieties of Mediums.
CHAPTER 17: FORMATION OF MEDIUMS
Development of Mediumship – Changes in the writing of Mediums – Loss and Suspension of Mediumship.
CHAPTER 18: DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS OF MEDIUMSHIP
Influence of Mediumship on the Health – Idem on the Brain – Idem on Children.
CHAPTER 19: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIUM IN SPIRIT COMMUNICATION
Influence of the Medium – Mediumship attributed to inert bodies – Aptitude of certain mediums for languages, music, drawing, etc., of which they have no present knowledge – Dissertation of a Spirit on the action of mediums in Spirit-Manifestations.
CHAPTER 20: MENTAL AND MORAL INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIUM
Questions – Dissertation of a Spirit on the Mental and Moral Influence of Mediums on Spirit-Manifestation.
CHAPTER 21: INFLUENCE OF SURROUNDINGS ON SPIRIT-MANIFESTATIONS
CHAPTER 22: MEDIUMSHIP OF ANIMALS
CHAPTER 23: OBSESSION
Simple Obsession – Fascination – Subjugation – Causes of Obsession – Means of combating Obsession.
CHAPTER 24: IDENTITY OF SPIRITS
Obtainable proofs of Identity – Distinction between Good and Evil Spirits – Questions on the Nature and Identity of Spirits.
CHAPTER 25: EVOCATIONS
General Considerations – Spirits who may be evoked – Mode of addressing Spirits – Utility of Special Evocations – Questions on Evocation – Evocation of Animals – Evocation of living People – Human Telepathy.
CHAPTER 26: QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO SPIRITS

Preliminary Observations – Questions that are agreeable or disagreeable to Spirits – Questions about the Future – About Past and Future Existences – About Moral and Worldly Interests – About the Destiny of Spirits – About Health – About Inventions and Discoveries – About Hidden Treasures – About other Worlds.
CHAPTER 27: CONTRADICTIONS AND HOAXES
CHAPTER 28: CHARLATANS
Mercenary Mediumship – Sham Spiritism
CHAPTER 29: SPIRITIST MEETINGS AND SOCIETIES
Of Meetings in General – Of Societies properly so-called – Subjects for study – Rivalry among Societies.
CHAPTER 30: PARISIAN SOCIETY FOR PSYCHOLOGIC STUDIES
CHAPTER 31: DISSERTATIONS BY SPIRITS
On Spiritism – Mediums – Meetings – Apocryphal Communications.
CHAPTER 32: SPIRITIST GLOSSARY

Translator's Preface

THE SECOND VOLUME of the Kardec series, which the translator has now the satisfaction of placing within the reach of English readers, treats of the experimental application of the theoretic principles laid down in *The Spirits' Book*, the first volume of that series.

Not only do these two books mutually elucidate each other,but each of them may be said to imply the other as its necessary complement. For, if the principles laid down in *The Spirits' Book* are true, the phenomena treated of in *The Mediums' Book* must occur as a matter of course; while, if the phenomena treated of in *The Mediums' Book* really occur, their occurrence proves the truth of the principles laid down in *The Spirits' Book*, because those phenomena are, at once, inexplicable by any other theory, and easily explicable with the aid of the theoretic principles laid down in that work.

The Mediums' Book is not addressed to Materialists, who must be brought from Materialism to Spiritualism, if at all, by their personal ascertainment of the reality of the modern spiritist "manifestations" and by the proof they give of the continued existence of the souls of the deceased men and women by whom they are produced. It is addressed exclusively to those who already believe that there is, in man, a principle of conscious individuality which survives the body, and who consequently admit, 1st, the action of LAW in the evolution of human life, and, 2nd, the existence of the Inscrutable creator of the universe, of whose Wisdom and Will that LAW is the expression, and who are therefore prepared to admit, Still further, that the Providential Ordaining may be expected to proceed, for the advancement of our knowledge of our extraterrestrial relations, as IT does for that of the sciences which deal with the various departments of our terrestrial life.

The science of mathematics, for instance, is open to every human being; yet it is only through the mind of a Euclid that its fundamental principles are given to the world.

Astronomy, Chemistry, Electricity, etc., are open to the study and investigation of all men; yet the *basis* of each of those sciences, as of all others, has been furnished, not by the multitude of seekers, but by the insight of some mastermind, on whose foundations succeeding inquirers have continued to build.

The most superficial glance at the world around us suffices to show us that the people of the earth are, as yet, in point of intelligence as of morality, of very slight average attainment; and they therefore need to be helped forward, in every department of intellectual inquiry, by spirits from worlds of greater advancement, who are incarnated among them, from time to time, for the purpose of assisting them to progress more rapidly in some given direction.

Owing to their mental and moral backwardness, men are slow to recognize the superiority of these Providentially given pioneers, and prone to resent,

as offensive to their self-love, the suggestion that any such superiority can exist They therefore usually “stone the prophets,” before accepting their clearer insights; but as they always end by perceiving that those insights are the true ground on which the further development of each branch of science must be worked out, the progress of human knowledge, though slow, is sure. But at what rate would that progress be accomplished if every student, ignoring the groundwork furnished by the masterminds of the past, undertook to build up his own department of science, *ab initio*, for himself? If every mathematician, for instance, regarded it as derogatory to his mental dignity to accept the help of a riper intellect than his own, and considered it incumbent upon him to evolve for himself, from his own cogitation, his own “Euclid?”

Applying this reasoning to the system of religious philosophy contained in the Kardec books, it is to be remarked that, although the domain of thought and experiment, in regard to the existence of spirits and the information they may have to give us, is open to all, the aid of some Providentially given *basis* of *truth* is even more imperatively needed in this new department of inquiry than in any other; and for the following reasons.

In the first place, because the spirits who communicate most frequently and habitually with men are precisely those who are nearest to them in ideas and in feeling, and who, consequently, *knowing little more than the human beings with whom they are in sympathy*, can only put forth short-sighted, discrepant, and erroneous statements; and, in the second place, because *the true explanation of human life* to which the phenomena of spirit-intercourse are intended to lead us, *is to be found in its connection with other modes and realms of existence* that can only be made known to us by intelligences who have reached a higher degree of knowledge and purity, and who – *not being at the command of men* – will only transmit their teaching according to Providential ordering, in a centre already prepared for its reception, and with the aid of the mastermind selected by themselves as the channel of that teaching; *a teaching which will necessarily differ from the various discrepant statements of the great mass of less enlightened spirits*. And the proof that such teaching is what it claims to be, *viz., information given by superior spirits in regard to matters essential to our progress, but which, in the nature of things, we could not find out for ourselves – and which they have therefore been charged by Providence to bring to our knowledge – can only be found in the light which it throws on the nature and aim of human life, on the ways of Providence, on duty, and on destiny*.

All those who have *made a serious study* of the theory of existence which Allan Kardec was employed to elaborate, have arrived at the conviction that it presents the proofs of authenticity and superiority just set forth as conclusive; and they therefore accept it, as the fundamentals of all sciences are accepted by students: that is to say, *not as exhaustive*, but as the true basis of further discovery – *not as a matter of arbitrary authority*, but on the

broad ground of its intrinsic reasonableness, and the satisfactory solutions it gives of the great problems of life, insoluble by any other theory.

The high moral tone of *The Mediums' Book*, as of all the writings of Allan Kardec, is in unison with the assertion so often repeated by the spirits whose communications he has coordinated with such exceptional Clearness and reach of thought, that the *aim* of the open intercourse which is now being established between spirits and men is not the mere gratification of Curiosity, not the mere enlargement of the Sphere of interesting inquiry, not even the mere giving of the certainty of our continued existence beyond the grave; but that *the sole aim of this intercourse is the moral improvement of the human race, which it will accomplish through the new light it will throw on the nature and purpose of human life*. By showing us that *our present is always the result of our past and the arbiter of our future, and that the acquisition of wisdom and benevolence is the sole condition of happiness*, this intercourse will furnish us with the most powerful incentive to the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of kindness; and it will thus effect the gradual amelioration of mankind that is destined to transform the earth from a world of punishment and discipline, as it now is, into a portal of the happier realms of existence to which we can only attain as the result of our intellectual and moral improvement.

No serious and intelligent student of the works of Allan Kardec has ever doubted that the theory of human progress, of which that early pioneer of the great spiritualistic movement of the present day was made to lay the foundations, will eventually be accepted as *the basis of a reasoned-out religious belief*, not only by all those who are interested in spirit-manifestations, but by the world at large. And this conviction of the Providential character of the works in question – abundantly justified by the reception they have eventually commanded wherever they have been introduced – will doubtless be still further strengthened by the gradual acceptance of *The Mediums' Book* in England and in the United States, in proportion as its scope and character become known in those countries; for, while the progressive development of spirit-manifestation has constantly brought new confirmation to the explanations of the phenomena given in this book at so early a stage of the great movement – *and often in advance of the occurrence of the phenomena themselves* – not a single phenomenon has occurred to disprove or invalidate those explanations.

The innumerable Contradictory "theories" that are put forth, *ad nauseam*, by ignorant and pretentious spirits of the "Borderland" – theories, that explain neither the facts of life nor those of spirit-manifestation, and that Cannot even account for their own production – are proved, by their emptiness, to be mere figments of prejudice and imagination, that will collapse through their own hollowness. On the other hand, the facts of spirit-manifestation, even the most admirable and important, if observed, as is too often the case, mainly as matters of personal interest or curiosity, and without being connected by a theory that can unite them into a

homogeneous and living whole, are as incapable of yielding intellectual and moral fruit as are the sands of the seashore of producing a harvest. But a theory that coincides with, and explains, all these facts, and that deduces from them the noblest intellectual and moral consequences, offers a firm and fruitful ground of truth and reality; and the general acceptance of such a theory can only be a question of time.

Anna Blackwell
Paris, 1876

Introduction

DAILY EXPERIENCE CONFIRMS us in the opinion that the difficulties and disappointments so often encountered in the practice of spiritism result from ignorance of its fundamental principles; and we rejoice to know that our endeavors to forewarn inquirers of the difficulties besetting this new study have borne fruit, and that many have been enabled to avoid them by an attentive perusal of the present work.

People who are interested in spiritism very naturally desire to enter into communication with spirits, and it is with a view to smoothing their path in this direction, by giving them the results of our own long and laborious investigation of the subject, that we have written this book, a perusal of which will show that those who imagine they have only to put their hands upon a table to make it move, or to hold a pencil to make it write, have come to a false conclusion in regard to the whole question.

They would be equally mistaken who should expect to find in this work a universal and infallible recipe for making mediums; for, although everyone possesses the germ of the qualities necessary for becoming a medium, those qualities exist in very different gradations, and their development depends on causes which no one can control by his own will alone. The rules of poetry, painting, and music, do not make poets, painters, or musicians, of those who are not gifted with genius, although those rules guide men in the employment of the abilities which they naturally possess. So it is with the work before us; its object is to indicate the means of developing psychic abilities so far as the receptivity of each will permit; and, above all, to guide it in a manner that may elicit its usefulness. Not, however, that this is the sole end for which the present work has been undertaken.

Besides mediums properly so-called, there is a daily increasing number of people seeking to obtain spirit-manifestations; to guide them in their endeavors, to point out the obstacles which they may, or rather, *will necessarily* meet with in this new field, to initiate them into the manner of Communicating with spirits, to indicate the means of obtaining good communications, such is the aim of this new work, however incompletely it may be attained. The reader must therefore not be surprised at finding in this book information which at first sight, may seem to be foreign to its purpose; experience will show its utility. After having carefully studied the subject, he will better comprehend the facts he may witness, and the language of some of the spirits will then appear less strange to him. The writer therefore addresses himself, not to mediums exclusively, but to all those who are desirous to study the phenomena of spiritism.

Some people have wished us to publish a very concise, practical manual, containing in a few words the method of procedure for obtaining communications from spirits; they think that a little book of that character would be widely disseminated, owing to the small price at which it could be issued, and would prove a powerful means of propaganda through the

growing number of mediums; but, for our own part, we should regard such a work as being, at the present time, more likely to be hurtful than useful.

The practice of spiritism is environed by difficulties, and is not exempt from danger which only complete and serious study can avert. It is therefore to be feared that too succinct a treatise might lead to experimentation too lightly made, and that might be injurious to the experimenters. Spiritism is a subject with which it is neither proper nor prudent to trifle; and we shrink from bringing it within the reach of every frivolous individual who might think it an amusing pastime to talk with the dead. We address ourselves to those who recognize the serious nature of the subject, who comprehend its great importance, and who do not make a sport of holding intercourse with the invisible world.

The present work will comprise all the data we have arrived at through long experience and conscientious study; and will help, we hope, to give to spiritism the character of seriousness which is essential to its usefulness, and to dissipate the idea that it may be taken up as a matter of frivolous curiosity and amusement.

We would add to the above considerations one more of no small importance, *viz.*, the unfavorable impression which the sight of experiments entered on lightly, and with no proper knowledge of the cause of the phenomena evolved, necessarily produces on novices and people who are ill-disposed towards spiritism, giving them a very false idea of the world of spirits, and bringing ridicule upon the cause of spiritism; skeptics usually leave such sittings unconvinced, and but little disposed to admit that Spiritism can have its serious side. The ignorance and frivolity of some mediums have done more harm to the cause than is generally supposed.

Spiritism has made great progress during the last few years, and especially since it has assumed a philosophical aspect; men of intelligence having become convinced of its reality and importance. Spiritism is no longer a *show*; it is a *doctrine:* and people who laughed at “table-turning” no longer deride it. We believe that, by doing our utmost to retain spiritism on this serious ground, we shall gain more useful partisans than by provoking random experimentations that may be dangerous; a conviction abundantly confirmed by the number of those who have been brought over to our side by the mere perusal of *The Spirits’ Book*.

Having treated of spiritism, in *The Spirits’ Book*, under its philosophical aspect, our object in the present work will be to elucidate its practical side for the guidance of those who are seeking manifestations through their own mediumship, and for those who desire to arrive at a correct appreciation of the phenomena. We would enable them to understand, and thus to avoid, the stumbling blocks they may find in their path.

These two works, although this one is a sequel to the other, are to a certain degree independent of each other; but we would counsel the serious inquirer to read *The Spirits’ Book* first, because it contains the fundamental

principles of spiritist science, without knowledge of which, certain parts of the present book would hardly be understood.

The present treatise has been corrected with the utmost care by the spirits who have superintended its production, and who have introduced into it a great variety of remarks and instructions of the deepest interest. They have revised the whole, approving or modifying its various portions at their pleasure; and their cooperation has not been confined to the giving of the articles signed by them, although we have only appended their signatures when we have considered it advisable to do so, in order to render more evident the character of the communications given. Had we appended the names of all who have taken part in the work, every page would have borne testimony to their collaboration. We have, however, appended their signatures to all answers made by them to questions, the utility of so doing being evident; but names, in general, are of little importance in such a matter, what is essential being that the work, in its entirety, should answer the end proposed.

Allan **Kardec**

Paris, 1861

PART ONE – PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

CHAPTER 1

Do Spirits Exist?

1. Doubt concerning the existence of spirits arises from ignorance of their real nature. People usually imagine spirits to be something apart from the rest of creation, and the reality of whose existence has not been proved. Many think of them as imaginary beings, known to them only through the fantastic tales of their childhood, and regard their authenticity much as they would that of the personages of a romance.

Without stopping to inquire whether those tales, divested of absurd accessories, may not have some foundation of truth, they see only their absurdities; and not giving themselves the trouble to peel off the bitter husk in order to get at the kernel, they reject the whole, just as others, shocked at certain abuses in religion, confound the whole subject in the same reprobation.

Whatever ideas we may hold in regard to spirits, the belief in their existence is necessarily founded on that of the existence of an intelligent principle distinct from matter. This belief is therefore incompatible with an absolute negation of such a principle.

We assume then, as the groundwork of our belief, the existence, survival, and individuality of the soul, of which *spiritualism* is the theoretic and doctrinal demonstration, and *spiritism* the practical proof. Let us then, for a moment, leave out of sight the fact of spirit-manifestations, properly so-called, and let us see to what conclusions we are led by inductive reasoning.

2. If we admit the existence of the soul and its individuality after death, we must necessarily also admit, 1st, that it is of a nature different from that of the body, since, when separated from the body, it enters upon a phase of existence distinct from the destiny of the body; that the soul retains, after death, its individuality and self-consciousness, and the capacity of feeling happiness and unhappiness, as otherwise it would be an inert being, and its existence would be equivalent to non-existence. These points being admitted, it follows that the soul goes somewhere; but what becomes of it, and whither does it go? According to the ordinary belief it goes to heaven or to hell; but where is heaven, and where is hell? People used formerly to say that heaven was “up on high,” and hell, “down below;” but what is “up,” and what is “down,” in the Universe, since we have learned that the earth is round, and that, through the movement of all the stellar bodies, what is “up” now, will be “down” twelve hours hence, and this throughout the immeasurable extent of infinite space? It is true that, by “below,” we may likewise understand the “deep places of the earth;” but what has become of those “deep places,” since geologists have begun to dig into the interior of the globe?

What has become of those concentric spheres called the “heaven of fire,” the “heaven of stars,” etc., since we have found out that the earth is not the centre of the universe, and that our sun is only one of the countless myriads of suns which shine in space, and each of which is the centre of a planetary system of its own? Where is now the earth’s importance, lost as it is in this immensity? And by what unjustifiable privilege shall we assume that this imperceptible grain of sand, distinguished neither by its bulk, its position, nor any peculiarity of attribute, is the only sphere peopled by intelligent creatures? Reason refuses to admit such an inutility of infinitude; and common sense declares that all the other worlds of the universe must be inhabited, and that, being inhabited, they, too, must furnish their contingent to the realm of souls.

But what, it may next be asked, becomes of the souls thus multiplied to infinity by the theory of the plurality of worlds, now that astronomy and geology have annihilated their ancient habitations?

To this question we reply that, the doctrine which formerly localized souls being opposed to the data of modern science, another and more logical doctrine assigns to then, as their domain, not any fixed and circumscribed localities, but universal space itself which is thus seen to be one grand system, in the midst of which we live, which surrounds us unceasingly, and touches us at every point. Is there anything inadmissible in such a theory, anything repugnant to our reason? Assuredly not; on the contrary, our reason tells us that it cannot be otherwise. But, it may next be asked, what becomes of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, if we rob them of their special localities? In replying to this objection, we must pause to remark that incredulity, in regard to those rewards and punishments, is ordinarily provoked by the fact of their being presented under inadmissible conditions; and that, if – instead of such conditions we assume that souls carry their happiness or their misery in themselves, that their lot is always determined by their moral state, that the union of good and sympathetic souls is a source of felicity, and that, according to their degree of purity, is their power of penetrating and discerning things that are still dark to souls of lower degree – all difficulties disappear, and the grand idea of our continuous existence becomes comprehensible and acceptable. Let us assume, still farther, that the degree of each soul’s elevation depends on the efforts it makes for its own amelioration during series of existences that serve as the means and tests of its progressive purification, that “angels” are only the souls of men who have attained to the highest degree of excellence; that all can attain to that degree by effort and determination; that those who have attained to that degree are God’s messengers, charged to superintend the execution of His designs throughout the universe, and finding their happiness in these glorious missions – and we surely attribute to the idea of our future felicity an end more useful and more attractive than that of a perpetual state of contemplation which would be only a perpetual state of inutility. Let us assume, yet farther, that “lemons” also

are no other than the souls of wicked men, not yet purified, but who have the power to purify themselves like the others, and it must surely be admitted that such a theory is more in conformity with the justice and goodness of God than the assumption that they were created for evil, and predestined to a perpetuity of misery. Is there, we ask, in such a theory, anything opposed to reason, anything, in a word, that the most rigorous logic, or plain common sense, can find any difficulty in admitting?

The souls, then, that people space, are what we call *spirits*: and *spirits* are nothing but the souls of men stripped of their envelope of gross terrestrial matter. If spirits were beings apart from ourselves, their existence would be merely hypothetical; but, if we admit that souls exist, we must also admit that spirits are nothing else than souls, and, if we admit that universal space is peopled by souls, we must equally admit that spirits are everywhere. We cannot deny the existence of spirits without denying the existence of souls.

3. All this, it is true, is only a theory, though one that is more rational than other theories; but it is something to possess a theory that is not in contradiction with reason or science, and if, moreover, this theory is corroborated by facts, it must be admitted that our position has the double sanction of reason and experience. Such corroborating facts we assert to be furnished by the phenomena of spirit manifestation, which constitute the irrefragable proofs of the existence and the survival of the soul. With many people, however, belief ends here; they readily admit the existence of souls, and consequently that of spirits, but they deny the possibility of holding communication with them, “because,” they say, “immaterial beings cannot act upon matter.” This denial proceeds from ignorance of the real nature of spirits, about which the world in general holds exceedingly false ideas, erroneously regarding them as abstract beings, as something vague and indefinite; which is a great mistake.

Let us, in the first place, consider the spirit in reference to its union with the body. The spirit is the principal being, because it is that which thinks, and which survives the body, the latter being only an envelope, a vestment, of gross matter, that the spirit throws off when it is worn out but, besides this material envelope, the spirit has a second envelope, which is semi-material, and which unites it to the first at death, the spirit casts off the first, but retains the second, to which we give the name *perispirit*.

This semi-material envelope, which has the human form, constitutes, for the spirit, a vaporous, fluidic body, which, though invisible to us in its normal state, nevertheless possesses some of the properties of matter. A spirit is therefore not a mathematical point, an abstraction, but is a real being, limited and circumscribed, and lacking only the qualities of visibility and palpability to show its resemblance to human beings. Why then should it not act on matter? Is it because its body is fluidic? But is it not among the most rarified fluids, those that we call “imponderable,” as electricity, for example, that man finds his most powerful motors? Does not light, exercise

a chemical action on matter? We do not understand the precise nature of the perispirit but supposing it to be formed of electrical matter, or of something else equally subtle, why should it not have the same property of action as electricity, when under the direction of a will?

4. The existence of the soul and the existence of God, as consequences of each other, being the basis of the edifice of spiritism, it is necessary, before entering on the discussion of this subject, to ascertain whether our reader admits that basis. If to the questions:

Do you believe in God?

Do you believe you have a soul?

Do you believe in the survival of the soul after death?

He responds with a negative, or even if he simply says:

"I do not know; I should be glad if it were so, but I do not feel sure of it" (a reply that would be usually equivalent to a polite negation, disguised under a gentler form to avoid wounding what he may regard as respectable prejudices), it would be as useless to continue our present argument with such a one, as it would be to demonstrate the properties of light to a blind man who did not believe in the existence of light: because, spirit-manifestations being neither more nor less than effects of the soul's peculiar qualities, it would be useless to reason thereupon with one who denies the soul's existence, and who would require a totally different line of argument from that of the present work. We therefore take it for granted that those who read this book admit the existence and survival of the soul; and if this basis is admitted, not as a mere probability, but as an acknowledged and incontestable fact, the existence of spirits follows as a natural consequence.

5. There still remains the question whether spirits can communicate with men; in other words, whether they can exchange thoughts with us? But why should they not do so? What is a man, if not a spirit imprisoned in a body? And why should not a free spirit be able to hold converse with a spirit in prison, just as a free man can converse with another who is bound in chains? If you admit the survival of the soul, is it rational not to admit the survival of the soul's affections? Since souls are everywhere, is it not natural to believe that the soul of one who has loved us during life should come near to us, should desire to communicate with us, and should, for that purpose, make use of the means in his power for doing so? Did not his soul, during his earth-life, act upon the matter of which his body was composed? Was it not his soul that directed the movements of his body? Why then, after death, if in sympathy with another spirit still bound to an earthly body, should he not borrow an earthly body in order to manifest his thoughts, just as a dumb man makes use of a man who can speak to express his wishes?

6. But let us leave out of sight, for the moment, the phenomena which, for us, render this fact incontestable, and let us admit its reality simply as a hypothesis; and considering the question from this point of view, let us ask the skeptic to prove to us, not by mere negation – for their personal opinion

is no law – but by arguments based on reason, that such communications can not take place. We will place ourselves on their own ground; and, since they insist on judging of spiritist facts by the laws of matter, we invite them to draw, from the arsenal of physical science, some demonstration, mathematical, chemical, or physiological, and to prove by *a plus b* (always, however, keeping in mind the principle acknowledged, *viz.*, that of the existence and survival of the soul) –

(1) That the being that thinks in us during life will no longer think after death.

(2) That, if it thinks, it will not think of those whom it has loved.

(3) That, if it thinks of those whom it has loved, it will not desire to communicate with them.

(4) That, if it has the power of being everywhere, it will not have the power of visiting us;

(5) That, if it can visit us, it will not have the power of communicating with us;

(6) That it will not be able to act upon inert matter by means of its fluidic envelope;

(7) That, if able to act upon inert matter, it will not be able to act upon an animated being;

(8) That, if able to act upon an animated being, it will not direct his hand, and make it write;

(9) That, being able to guide a human hand in writing, it will not be able to answer questions, and transmit its own thoughts to the questioner.

When the adversaries of spiritism shall have proved all this, by reasoning as incontrovertible as that by which Galileo proved that the sun does not turn round the earth, we will admit that their doubts are founded. But as, up to the present time, their whole argument may be summed up in words such as these "*I do not believe these things, therefore they are impossible,"* they will doubtless tell us that it is for us to prove the reality of the manifestations; to which we reply, that we prove them both by facts and by reasoning, and that, if they admit neither the one nor the other, if they deny even what they see themselves, it is for them to prove that our reasoning is false, and that the facts we adduce are impossible.

CHAPTER 2

The Marvelous And The Supernatural

7. If the belief in spirits and in their manifestations were an isolated exception, the product of a theory, it might, with some show of reason, be attributed to illusion; but how is it that we find this belief in vigor among all peoples, ancient and modern, as well as in the writings recognized as sacred in all known religions? It is, say some critics, because man, in all ages, has sought the marvelous. But what then, is the marvelous? – That which is supernatural. – How do you define the supernatural? – That which is contrary to the laws of nature. – Ah! You are, then, sufficiently acquainted with those laws to assign a limit to their action? If so, prove to us that the existence of spirits, and their manifestations, are contrary to the laws of nature; prove they are not, and can not be, a result of natural law. Examine the doctrine of the spiritists, and see whether its chain of reasoning has not all the character of an admirable Jaw, solving all the problems that human philosophies have been unable to solve up to the present day?

Thought is one of the attributes of a spirit; the possibility of acting upon matter, of impressing the senses, and, as a natural consequence, of transmitting its thought, has its origin in the soul's physiological constitution, if we may so express it; there is, then, in this alleged fact, nothing supernatural, nothing marvelous. For a man who is dead to revive corporeally, for his scattered members to reunite to reform his body, would certainly be something marvelous, supernatural, fantastic; something that would indeed be a veritable derogation from His own laws that God could only accomplish by a miracle: but we find nothing of the sort in the teachings of spiritism.

8. Nevertheless, there are people who say: "You, on your side, admit that a spirit can raise a table and retain it in space; is not that contrary to one of nature's laws, *viz.*, the law of gravitation?" Yes, contrary to that law as commonly understood; but do you suppose that nature has revealed to us all its secrets? Before experiment had shown us the accessional force of certain gases, who could have imagined that a heavy machine, bearing several men, could triumph over the force of attraction, and would not the assertion of such a possibility have appeared incredible? If a man had proposed, a century ago, to send a dispatch five hundred leagues, and to receive an answer to it, in the course of a few minutes, he would have passed for a madman; if he had done it, he would have been declared to have the devil at his beck and call, for, in those days, it was only the devil who could travel so quickly. Why, then, may there not be some fluid, as yet unknown to us, possessing the property, under certain circumstances, of counterbalancing the action of density, as hydrogen counterbalances the weight of a balloon? This suggestion, we would remark in passing, is only a comparison, and not an assimilation, arid is brought forward solely to show, by analogy, that the

fact assumed is not physically impossible. It is, in truth, precisely when the learned, in their observation of these phenomena, have endeavored to proceed by the road of assimilation, that they have gone astray. In reality, the fact exists, and all the negation in the world cannot get rid of it, for denying is not disproving; in our eyes, there is nothing supernatural about it, and this is all we have to say of it for the present.

9. "If the fact be proved," some may say, "we accept it as such; we even accept the cause which you assign to it, *viz.*, that of an unknown fluid; but what proves the intervention of spirits? *That* would indeed be marvelous; *that* would be supernatural!"

To meet this objection, we should have to enter upon a demonstration that would be out of place in the present book, and that would, in fact, be a work of supererogation, since the action of disincarnate spirits, as the cause of the phenomena in question, is affirmed in every branch of its teachings. Nevertheless, to sum up these in a few words, we will say that they are founded, in theory, on this principle, *viz.*, that *every intelligent effect must have an intelligent cause*, and, in practice, on the fact that the phenomena called *spiritist* having given proofs of the action of intelligence, must have their cause in something outside of matter; that this intelligence, not proceeding from those who are present at the sitting – a point fully proved by experience – must be extraneous to the sitters, and that, as no active agent is visible, this intelligence must be that of some invisible being. It is, then, through repeated observation that we have arrived at the certainty that this invisible being, to which the name of "*spirit"* has been given, is nothing else than the soul of one who has lived in the body, one whom death has deprived of his gross, visible envelope, leaving him with an ethereal envelope invisible to us in its normal state.

The existence of invisible beings once proved, their power over matter results from the very nature of their fluidic envelope; and the action of this power is intelligent, because, at death, those invisible beings only lost their body, but retained their intelligence, which is, in fact, their essence. The existence of spirits is therefore no preconceived theory, no mere hypothesis, invented to explain certain facts; it is a result of experience and of observation, and is the natural consequence of the existence of the soul: to deny their existence is to deny the soul and its attributes. If anyone thinks he can give a more rational explanation of the phenomena in question, let him do so, taking care, however, to give a rational explanation of *all* the facts of the case; and, when this has been done, we can discuss the merits of both sides of the question.

10. In the eyes of those who regard matter as the sole power in nature, *everything that cannot be explained by the laws of matter is marvelous or supernatural*; and with such, *the marvelous* is only another word for *superstition*. With such minds religion, being founded on the existence of an immaterial principle, is but a tissue of superstitions; few dare to assert this openly, but many say it in whispers, and think they save appearances by

conceding that religion is necessary for the people, and for keeping children in order. To such we would submit the following dilemma; either the religious principle is true, or it is false; if it be true, it is true for all men, if it be false, it can no more be useful to the ignorant than to the wise.

11. Those who attack spiritism as being “marvelous,” really play into the hands of the materialist, since, by denying all extra-material effects, they virtually deny the existence of the soul. Go to the bottom of their thought, examine the tendency of what they assert, and it will generally be found that they reason from materialistic principles, implied, if not openly asserted. Under cover of their pretended rationality, their denial is but the logical consequence of their premise; they reject all that naturally follows from the soul’s existence, because they do not really believe in that existence: for, not admitting the cause, how can they logically admit its effects? Hence they are fettered by a preconceived opinion which unfits them for judging soundly with respect to spiritism, since their starting point is the negation of all that is not material. For ourselves, as we admit the consequences that flow from the existence of the soul, it follows, as a matter of course, that we have accepted the facts qualified as “marvelous;” but it does not therefore follow that we are the champion of every dreamer, of every fancy, of all the eccentricities put forth by builders of theories. Those who could so far misunderstand us can know very little of spiritism; but our adversaries do not look at the matter so closely, and the duty of understanding what they are talking about is too often the thing they care least for. According to them, whatever is “marvelous” is absurd; and, as spiritism is grounded on facts which appear to them to be “marvelous,” they jump to the conclusion that spiritism is absurd. Regarding their verdict as being without appeal, they think they have brought out an irrefutable argument when, after having paraded the histories of the convulsionaries of Saint Medard, the fanatics of the Cevennes, and the nuns of Loudun, they point to facts of trickery which no one contests; but are such histories the gospel of spiritism? Have spiritists ever denied that charlatans have imitated some of the facts of spirit-manifestation from love of lucre, that some pretended manifestations have been the creation of an overexcited imagination, or that fanaticism has dealt largely in exaggeration? Spiritism is no more answerable for the extravagancies that may have been committed in its name, than is true science for the abuses of ignorant pretenders, or true religion for the excesses of the fanatic. Many critics only judge of spiritism by the fairy tales and popular legends which are, in fact, its fictions; as well might they judge of history by historical romance.

12. According to the most elementary rules of logic, it is necessary to understand a question before discussing it for the critic’s verdict is of no value unless founded on a complete knowledge of his subject; in that case, and in that alone, his opinion, even if erroneous, may be worthy of consideration but what is it worth in a matter of which he is ignorant? The true critic should give proof, not only of erudition, but of thorough

knowledge of the subject of which he treats, of sound judgment, and unquestionable impartiality; otherwise we might as ‘veil be guided by the opinion of the first organ-grinder we meet with who should take upon himself to criticize Rossini, or that of any mere copyist who might think fit to censure Raphael.

13. Spiritism, then, does not accept all facts reputed to be marvelous or supernatural; so far from doing this, it demonstrates the impossibility of a great number of such, and the absurdity of certain beliefs which constitute, strictly speaking, “superstition.” It is true that, in what it does admit, there are things which, to the skeptic, appear to belong to the domain of the *marvelous*, in other words, of what they regard as *superstition*; but, let them at least confine themselves to the discussion of these, for, in regard to the others, the spiritist has nothing to say, and the skeptic, in denouncing them to us, would be only “carrying coals to Newcastle.” Those who attack us, in regard to abuses which we ourselves repudiate, prove their own ignorance of the matter in question; and their argumentation is simply thrown away. “But where,” cry some of our opponents, “does the belief of spiritists stop?” Read and mark, and you will know. No knowledge is acquired without time and study; and spiritism, which involves the profoundest questions of philosophy and of social order, which deals at the same time with the physical man and with the moral man, is in itself a science, a philosophy, which can no more be apprehended in a few hours than any other. For those who are not content to rest on the surface, the study of such a subject is a question, not of hours, but of months and of years. Of what value, then, can be the opinion of those who arrogate to themselves the right of pronouncing judgment upon it, because they have witnessed one or two experiments, undertaken, perhaps, rather as an amusement than as a matter of serious inquiry? Such people will doubtless affirm that they have not the leisure necessary for such a study; but, when people have not time to inform themselves correctly about any matter, they should refrain from talking about it, and especially from committing themselves to any opinion in regard to it and the higher their position in the world of science, the less excusable are they when they talk about what they do not understand.

14. We sum up our preceding remarks in the following propositions:

(1) All spiritist phenomena imply, as their principle, the existence of the soul, its survival of the body, and the manifestations which result therefrom.

(2) These phenomena, occurring in virtue of natural law, are neither “marvelous” nor “supernatural,” in the ordinary sense of those words.

(3) Many facts are only reputed to be “supernatural” because their cause is unknown; spiritism, by assigning to them a cause, brings them within the domain of natural phenomena.

(4) Among the facts commonly called “supernatural,” there are many which spiritism shows to be impossible, and which it therefore relegates into the category of superstitions.

(5) Although spiritism recognizes a foundation of truth in many popular beliefs, it by no means accepts all the fantastic stories created by the imagination.
(6) To judge of spiritism by pretended facts, the reality of which it does not admit, is to give proof of ignorance, and to deprive such judgment of all weight.
(7) The explanation of the causes of facts acknowledged by spiritism, and the ascertainment of their moral consequences, constitute a new science and a new philosophy, requiring serious, persevering, and careful study.
(8) Spiritism can only be conclusively disproved by one who should have thoroughly studied it and sounded its deepest mysteries with the patient perseverance of a conscientious observer; one as well versed in every branch of the subject as the most ardent of its adherents; one acquainted with all the facts of the case, and with every argument that could be opposed to him, and which he must refute, not by denials, but by arguments still more conclusive; one, in short, who can give, of admitted facts, a more rational explanation than is given by spiritism. But such a critic has yet to be discovered.
15. We have, in the foregoing argument, pronounced the word *miracle*; a short observation on this subject will not be out of place in a chapter treating of the “marvelous.”
The word *miracle*, in its primitive acceptation, and by its etymology, signifies *something extraordinary, something admirable or wonderful*; but this word, like many others, has lost its original meaning, and has come to be understood, in common parlance, as *an ad of the Divine power, contrary to the known laws of nature*. This is, in fact, its usual acceptation; and it is no longer applied to common things which surprise us and of which the cause is unknown, except as a metaphor. It is not our intention to examine, in this place, whether God may see fit, under certain circumstances, to act in opposition to the laws established by Himself; our object is solely to show that spirit-phenomena, extraordinary as they are, derogate in no degree from those laws, that they have no “miraculous” character, and are not even “marvelous” or “supernatural.” A miracle cannot be explained; spirit-phenomena, on the contrary, explain themselves, and in the most rational manner; they are, therefore, not miracles, but simply effects that occur in virtue of general laws. A miracle has quite another character; it is something unusual, isolated. If a fact can be made to recur, so to say, at will, and through different people, that fact is no miracle.
Science works miracles daily in the eyes of the ignorant. In former times, any man who knew more than his neighbors passed for a sorcerer, and, as people then believed that all unusual knowledge came from the devil, they generally burned him; but now that we have become so much more civilized, we content ourselves with consigning such a one to the madhouse.
For a man who is really dead, as we remarked above, to be recalled to life by Divine intervention, would be a veritable miracle, because it would be

contrary to the laws of nature. But if the man's death were only apparent, if there were still within him some remains of latent vitality, and if a physician, or a magnetizer, should intervene and restore him to life, it would be, to men of science, a natural phenomenon; but, in the eyes of the ignorant vulgar, it would pass for a miracle, and its author would either be stoned by the mob, or venerated by it, according to circumstances. If, in some rural district, a natural philosopher, with the aid of an electrical machine, should strike down a tree, as though by lightning, the new Prometheus would certainly be regarded as being armed with diabolical power (and here let us remark, in passing, that old Prometheus would seem to have got the start of Franklin); but the arresting of the movement of the sun, or rather of the earth, by Joshua, would indeed be a miracle, for we know of no magnetizer sufficiently powerful to accomplish such a prodigy. Of all the spirit phenomena one of the most extraordinary, without doubt, is that of direct writing, demonstrating, as it does, the power of the occult intelligences by whom it is effected; but it is no more miraculous than any of the other phenomena due to the action of those invisible agents, because the occult beings who people space are one of the powers of nature, and exercise an incessant action on the material world, as well as on the moral world.

Spiritism, by enlightening us in regard to this power, gives us a key to a host of things hitherto unexplained, and that are inexplicable by any other theory; things which, in the olden times, have passed for prodigies. Spiritism, like magnetism, reveals to us a law, the effects of which, if not wholly unknown, have been hitherto imperfectly understood; a law of which, while its effects were known, the world was ignorant, and the ignorance of which engendered superstition. This law being known, the marvelous disappears; and phenomena, formerly regarded as miraculous or super natural, are brought into the category of natural things. spiritists no more perform miracles by making a table to rap, or the so-called dead to write, than does the physician when he restores a sick man to health, or the electrician, when he produces artificial lightning.

Whoever should pretend to *perform miracles* by the aid of spiritism would prove himself an ignoramus or a charlatan by the mere fact of such a pretension.

16. Spirit-phenomena, like magnetic phenomena, before their cause is known, may well pass for prodigies; and those who, imagining themselves to have a monopoly of reason and common sense, refuse to admit the possibility of anything they do not understand, have naturally made these reputed prodigies the object of their raillery.

And since religion asserts various facts of a similar character, those who thus scoff at the one, not infrequently disbelieve the other. But spiritism, giving a rational explanation of many of the facts formerly held by science to be impossible, comes to the aid of religion, by proving the possibility or certain occurrences which are not the less extraordinary for not being

miraculous, and in regard to which we see that God is not less great, nor less powerful, for not having violated His own laws. What discussions have been excited by the levitations of St Cupertin! Yet the suspension in the air of heavy bodies is a fact explained by spirit-laws; and Mr. Home and other mediums known to us have frequently repeated the phenomenon manifested by St Cupertin. This phenomenon, therefore, is now included within the order of natural occurrences.

17. Among the facts of spiritism, we must give a prominent place to apparitions, because they are of such frequent occurrence. That of La Salette, which sets the clergy themselves at loggerheads, is no new thing for us. We cannot affirm that the fact asserted really took place, because we have no sufficient proof of its having done so; but we regard it as possible, because thousands of recent facts of a similar character are known to us, and because we can perfectly explain how such a phenomenon might take place. Let the reader only refer to the theory that we give, further on, concerning apparitions, and he will see that the phenomenon referred to is as simple and as probable as are a great number of other physical phenomena which are only regarded as prodigies because no key has yet been found to them. The identity of the personage said to have been seen at La Salette is another question; for that identity is by no means proved. We simply avert that such an apparition may have presented itself, more than this we are not competent to allege, and we leave everyone free to form his own judgment. Spiritism has not to occupy itself with the matter. All we say is, that the facts of spiritism reveal to us new laws, and give us the key to a multitude of things which used to be considered supernatural; and that, as many things, which used to pass for miraculous, find a logical solution in spiritism, we need be in no haste to deny what we do not understand.

Spirit-phenomena are sometimes contested because they appear to contradict known laws, and people therefore cannot see how they are to be accounted for. Give them a rational explanation of these things, and their doubt ceases.

Explanation is the true means of conviction; and we constantly see those who have never witnessed any spirit-phenomena as fully convinced of the reality of those phenomena, as we are ourselves, because they have read, and have comprehended their possibility. Were we to believe nothing that we had not beheld with our own eyes, the sum of our convictions would be reduced to a minimum.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology And Process

18. A very natural and praiseworthy desire of all spiritists, a desire which cannot be too much encouraged, is to make proselytes. It is with a view to facilitate their task that we propose here to suggest to them the surest method, in our opinion, of attaining this end, and of sparing themselves the labor of making efforts that may prove of no avail.

We have already said that spiritism is a new science, a new philosophy; he who wishes to understand it should therefore, as the first condition of doing so, lay himself out for serious work, with the full persuasion that this science, like every other, is not to be attained by making a play of it. Spiritism, as we have said, touches on every question that interests humanity; its field is immense, and it is especially in the vastness and importance of its consequences that the experimenter will find this to be true. A belief in spirits is undoubtedly its basis; but this belief no more suffices to make an enlightened spiritist, than the belief in God suffices to make a theologian. Let us, then, consider the mode of proceeding that is best fitted to enable propagandists to attain the end they have in view.

19. It is generally supposed that, in order to convince, it is sufficient to demonstrate facts. Such would indeed appear to be the most logical method; nevertheless, experience shows us that it is not always the best, for one often meets with people whom facts the most irrefragable do not convince in the slightest degree. The reason of this failure we shall now try to make apparent.

In spiritism, the question of spirit-communications is secondary and consequential; it is not the starting point. Spirits being nothing else than the souls of men, the proper ground for argument is the existence of the soul. But how can we get the materialist to admit that beings exist outside the material world, when he believes that he himself is nothing but matter? How can he believe in spirits outside himself, when he does not believe that he has a spirit within himself? In vain will you urge the most conclusive arguments on such a one; he will contest them all, because he does not admit the principle which is their basis. All methodical teaching should proceed from the known to the unknown; what the materialist knows about, is matter; take your stand, then, on matter, and endeavor, above all things, while bringing his mind on to your standpoint, to convince him that there is in himself something beyond the laws of matter; in a word, *before trying to make him a spiritist* try to make him a *spiritualist*; but, for that purpose, you must appeal to quite a different order of facts, and adduce arguments of a very different character. To talk to a man of spirits, before he is convinced that he has a soul, is to begin where you should end; for he cannot admit the consequence, if he do not admit the premise. You should, before undertaking to convince the skeptic, even by facts, make sure of their

Opinion respecting the soul, that is to say, ascertain whether they believe in its existence, in its survival of the body, in its individuality after death; if their answer is negative, to speak of spirits would be trouble thrown away. This is the rule; we do not say there are no exceptions to it, but, in the exceptional cases, there is probably some other cause which renders your interlocutor less recalcitrant.

20. We must especially distinguish two classes among the materialists. In the first class we may place those who are so theoretically. With these, it is not doubt, but negation, absolute, and rational from their point of view; in their eyes, man is only a machine, which goes as long as it is wound up, but of which the spring wears out; a being of which, after death, nothing remains but the carcass. The number of such thinkers being happily very limited, it seems hardly necessary to insist upon the deplorable effects which the generalization of such a doctrine would exert on social order; we have been sufficiently explicit in regard to this point in *The Spirits' Book* (147 and *Conclusion*)

In saying that the skeptic cease to doubt when met by a rational explanation, we must except those ultra materialists who deny all power and intelligence outside of matter; pride renders the majority of these obstinate, and they persist in their denials from personal vanity; they resist all proofs, because they do not wish to have to change an Opinion expressed by them. With such people you can do nothing, not even when they feign sincerity, and say: "Let me see, and I will believe." Others, more frank, say plainly: "If I saw, I should not believe."

21. The second class of materialists, and by far the most numerous (for materialism is a sentiment contrary to nature),comprehends those who are such through indifference, and, so to say, *for want of something better*; they are not materialists from conviction, and they would rejoice to be able to believe, for their state of uncertainty is a torment to them. In such men, there is a vague aspiration after the future, but this future has been represented to them under aspects that their reason could not accept; hence their doubt1 and, as the consequence of their doubt, their unbelief. With such people, incredulity is not theoretic; present to them a theory which is rational, and they will accept it gladly; such men can understand us, for they are nearer to us than they think. With the first class, speak not of revelation, of angels, or of "paradise," for they would not understand you, but, placing yourself on their own ground, prove to them, first of all, that the laws of physics are not able to explain everything; the rest will come in due time. It is altogether different with the incredulity which is not a foregone conclusion; in such cases, belief is not absolutely null, there is a latent germ, stifled by creeds, but which a ray of light may vivify; such doubters are like a blind man whose eyes you may open, and who will rejoice to behold the day, or like a ship wrecked mariner, who will seize the plank of safety you hold out to him.

22. Besides the materialists, properly so-called, there is a third class of the skeptic, who, though spiritualists, at least in name, are nonetheless troublesome to deal with on that account; they are the *skeptical through ill will*. They find it unpleasant to believe, because it would trouble their enjoyment of material pleasures; they fear to see in spiritism the doom of their ambition, of their selfishness, of the human vanities which are their delight; they shut their eyes, that they may not see, and stop their ears, that they may not hear. We can only pity them.

23. A fourth category may be called the *skeptic through interest or dishonesty*. They know well what spiritism really is, but they outwardly condemn it from motives of personal interest. Of these, there is nothing to be said, as, with them, there is nothing to be done. If the thorough materialist deceives himself, he has at any rate the excuse of sincerity, and may be brought round by showing him his error; with the others, it is a resolution against which all argument fails. Time will open their eyes and show them, perhaps to their cost, where their interests really lay; for, as they cannot hinder the current of truth, they will, at length, be swept away by the torrent, together with the artificial interests they desired to secure.

24. Besides these different categories of opponents, there is an infinity of shades, among which we may enumerate those who are *incredulous from cowardice*, and to whom courage will come when they see that others do not injure themselves by avowing their belief; the *incredulous from religious scruples*, who will learn, through enlightened study, that spiritism rests upon the fundamental bases of religion, that it respects all beliefs, and that one of its effects is to produce religious sentiments where they did not formerly exist and to fortify them where they were formerly wavering; the *incredulous from pride*, *from a spirit of contradiction*, *from carelessness*, *from levity*, etc., etc.

25. We cannot omit one other class which we will call the *incredulous from disappointment*. This class comprehends those who have passed from an exaggerated confidence to incredulity, because their expectations have been deceived, discouraged in consequence, they have abandoned the whole thing, and cast it altogether aside. They are like people who deny that probity exists, because they have been taken in. This, also, is the result of an imperfect knowledge of spiritism. When a person is hoaxed by spirits, it is generally because he has asked them something they could not, or might not tell, or because he was not sufficiently enlightened on the subject to discern truth from imposture. Many people, it is to be remarked, see in spiritism only a new mode of divination; they fancy that spirits may be made to tell their fortunes, and, accordingly, flippant and mocking spirits amuse themselves at their expense, preparing for them mystifications and disappointments to which serious and prudent people would not have laid themselves open.

26. A very numerous class, perhaps the most numerous of all, is one which we cannot place under the head of opponents, *viz.*, those who are

undecided. These are generally spiritualists, in principle; with the greater number of them there is a vague intuition of spiritist ideas, and an aspiration after something that they cannot define.

Such people only require methodical instruction spiritism is, for these, like a sunrise; it is the brightness of day which dissipates the mists of night; they hail it with eagerness, because it delivers them from the agony of uncertainty.

27. If from these, we turn to consider the different categories of *believers*, we remark those who are *spiritists without being aware of it*; they are, properly speaking, a variety of the preceding class. Without ever having heard of the spiritist theory, they have an innate sentiment of the grand principles which it embraces; and this sentiment is found reflected, in certain passages of their writings or their words, so clearly that they might almost be supposed to be completely initiated. We find numerous examples of this class among writers, both sacred and profane, among poets, orators, moralists, and philosophers, both ancient and modern.

28. Among those whom direct study has convinced, we may distinguish:

(1) *Those who believe purely and simply in the manifestations*. For these, spiritism is a simple science of observation, a series of facts more or less curious; they may be called *experimental spiritists*.

(2) Those who see in spiritism something more than its peculiar phenomena, and perceive its philosophical bearing; they admire its morality, but do not practice it, and its influence on their character is slight or null; they change none of their habits, and do not deprive themselves of a single enjoyment; the covetous man remains sordid, the proud man remains full of himself, the envious and the jealous remain the same. For them, Christian charity is only a beautiful ideal; they are *inconsistent spiritists*.

(3) *Those who are not content with admiring the morality of spiritist doctrine, but who accept it practically, with all its consequences*. Convinced that terrestrial life is only a brief trial, they strive to profit by its passing moments, and to advance, on the road of progress by which alone they can reach a higher degree in the hierarchy of the world of spirits, through activity in doing good, and in repressing their evil tendencies.

Intercourse with such is always safe, for their convictions preserve them from all thought of evil, and charity is in all things their rule of conduct. They may be classed as *true spiritists*, or better yet, as *Christian spiritists*.

(4) Lastly, there are the *excited spiritists*. The human race would be perfect, if it took tip only the right side of a thing. Exaggeration is always hurtful; in Spiritism, it engenders a too-blind confidence in everything that proceeds from the invisible world; a confidence which sometimes becomes puerile, causing people to accept, too easily, and unreasoningly, what reflection and examination would have shown them to be absurd or impossible.

Unfortunately, enthusiasm finds it hard to reflect, and is apt to get dazed. Such adherents are more hurtful than useful to the cause of spiritism; they

are unfit to convince, because their judgment is distrusted; they become the easy dupes, either of spirits who hoax them, or of men who practice on their credulity. If they alone had to suffer the consequences of their blindness, the latter would be less regrettable; but, unhappily, such people unintentionally put arms into the hands of the skeptic, more desirous of opportunities for railing than of conviction, and prompt to impute, to all, the absurdities of the few.

29. The methods for convincing vary according to the individuals to be acted on; for what persuades one does not touch another. One man is convinced by physical manifestations, another by intelligent communications, but the greater number, by reasoning. It may even be said that, for most of those who are not previously prepared by reasoning, physical phenomena have but little weight. The more extraordinary these phenomena are, and the more they diverge from ordinary experience, the more opposition do they encounter; and this, for the very simple reason, that we are naturally prone to doubt whatever has not a rational sanction; each man regarding such a matter from his Own point of view, and interpreting it in his own way. Thus the materialist attributes such phenomena to some purely physical action, or to trickery; the ignorant and superstitious attribute them to some diabolical or supernatural agency; while a preliminary explanation has the effect of disarming prejudice, and of showing, if not their reality, at least, their possibility. Those, who begin by seeking for explanation, comprehend before they have seen; for them, when they have acquired the certainty that the phenomena are possible, the conviction of their reality is easily arrived at.

30. Is there any use in trying to convince an obstinate unbeliever? We have said that this depends upon the cause and the nature of his incredulity; it often happens that the persistence with which people attempt to convert an unbeliever only serves to puff him up with an exaggerated sense of his importance, and thus renders him all the more obstinate. If a man cannot be convinced either by reasoning or by facts, it is evident that he has still to undergo the affliction of incredulity; we must leave to Providence the care of bringing him into more favorable circumstances. There are too many people ready for the light, for us to lose time over those who only desire to shut it out. Make your advances, then, rather to those who are favorably inclined, of whom the number is greater than is generally supposed. Address yourselves to these; for their example will accomplish more than words. The true spiritist will never fail to be doing good; his delight is to give consolation, to calm despair, and to forward the work of moral reformation. Therein lies his mission; therein will he find his true joy. Spiritism is in the air; it scatters benefits by its very nature, because it renders happy those who profess it. When its obstinate adversaries feel its influence around them in the homes of their friends, they will comprehend their own isolation, and will be forced into silence or acceptance.

31. To proceed in the study of spiritism as is done in the other sciences, it would be necessary to pass experimentally through the whole series of spirit-phenomena, beginning with the simplest, to arrive in succession at the more complicated; but this cannot be done, because it would be impossible to go through a regular course of experimentation, in spiritism, as we do in physics or chemistry. In the natural sciences, we operate on brute matter, manipulating it at will, and with almost a certainty of producing a given effect; in spiritism, on the contrary, we have to deal with intelligences who have their liberty, and who constantly prove to us that they are not subject to our commands. It is consequently necessary to await the occurrence of the phenomena, holding ourselves in readiness to observe them as they occur; and we therefore assert that *whoever should dare to assert that he can obtain any given phenomena at his pleasure can be only an ignoramus or an impostor:* for these phenomena, being independent of our will, may fail to be manifested when they are wanted, or may present themselves under quite a different aspect from that which we may desire. Let us add, that, in order to obtain them, we must have the cooperation of people endowed with special abilities, and that these abilities are infinitely varied, according to the aptitude of each individual; and, as the same medium rarely possesses all these abilities, a new difficulty is thus created, since, in order to go through such a course of experimental spiritism, we should require to have always at hand a complete assortment of mediums, which is evidently impossible.

The way to obviate this inconvenience is very simple, *viz.*, to commence with the theory. In this way, all the phenomena are passed in review and explained, the inquirer gets at the gist of the matter, and understands the possibilities of the case and the conditions under which the phenomena may occur, as well as the obstacles that may be met with. Thus, whatever may occur will find him prepared, and nothing can take him by surprise. This plan offers yet another advantage, inasmuch as it spares the practical investigator a vast number of disappointments because, being forewarned of difficulties, he is able to keep on his guard, and to avoid having to gain experience at his own expense.

It would be difficult for us to compute the number of those who have come to us since we have been occupied with spiritism; and how many of these have we seen, who have remained indifferent or skeptical in presence of the most evident facts, and who have only been convinced by rational explanation; how many others who had been predisposed to conviction by reasoning; how many were already persuaded of the truth of spiritism, though they had seen nothing, because they had read and had understood the *rationale* of the matter! We therefore say, from our own experience, that the best method of acquiring knowledge of spiritism is to bring reasoning to bear on the subject, *first of all* and *afterwards* to confirm reasoning by experiment.

32. A preliminary study of the theory of spiritism is also useful, by showing the grandeur of its scope and aim he who begins by seeing a table move, or hearing it rap, is the more inclined to raillery, because he cannot imagine that such manifestations lead up to a doctrine that is destined to regenerate humanity. We have always remarked that those who have believed before seeing, because they had read and comprehended, so far from being superficial, were, on the contrary, the most intelligent and thoughtful.

Intent on the substance rather than the form, and the philosophical aspect of spiritism being the chief consideration with minds of this character, the phenomena are to them only accessories. They see that, even if the phenomena did not exist, the philosophy would still remain as the sole solution of problems insoluble up to the present time, the most rational theory yet propounded of the past and of the future. The manifestations are invaluable as *corroboration* and *confirmation* of this theory, but they are not its *basis*. And proof of this view of the subject is found in the fact that thousands, before they had ever heard of the manifestations, had an intuitive perception of the doctrine, which has only served to give form and coherence to ideas that had, previously, been vaguely held by them.

33. It would not, however, be strictly correct to assert that those who commence by the study of the spiritist theory are without the corroboration of facts. On the contrary, they have an abundance of facts confirmatory of this theory, in the numerous cases of *Spontaneous manifestation*, concerning which we shall speak in succeeding chapters, a class of facts of which there are few people who have not had some cognizance in their own experience, although they may have paid but little attention to them. Facts of this kind have great weight when supported by unexceptionable testimony, because, in such cases, there can be no suspicion of preparation or collusion. Even if the spiritist phenomena did not exist, the spontaneous phenomena would nonetheless be facts; and if the only result of the spiritist theory were to explain as it does the spontaneous phenomena that have occurred in all ages, its value would evidently be very great.

34. The reader, however, would greatly mistake our views if he supposed that we would counsel him to neglect the modern manifestations, for it is through them that we have been led to the theory in question. It is true that we have had to devote ourselves assiduously, during several years, to collating the results of innumerable observations, in working out this theory to its completion; but, inasmuch as these manifestations have served us, and serve us daily, for the elucidation of the views we have arrived at, it would be impossible for us to underrate their importance, especially in writing a book with the object of making them known. What we would say is, that, unless we reason upon them, the phenomena themselves do not suffice to determine conviction; that a preliminary explanation, by disarming prejudices, and by showing that there is nothing in those phenomena contrary to reason, paves the way for the admission of their reality. This is so true, that, of ten people new to the subject who may assist

at an experimental *séance*, however satisfactory it may be in the eyes of those who are convinced already, nine of them will leave the room without being convinced, and some of them even more skeptical than they were before, because the experiment has not come up to their expectations. Quite otherwise will it be with those who are able to estimate correctly what they see, thanks to a theoretic knowledge of the subject, previously obtained. For these, the *séance* is a means to an end, and nothing takes them by surprise, not even failure, because they know the conditions under which the phenomena occur, and that it is useless to ask for what cannot be had.

Knowledge gained in advance of facts puts us in a position to estimate aright even the anomalies presented by them, and to seize a multitude of details and shades, often of the most delicate nature, which for us are so many sources of conviction, but which would not be appreciated, nor even noted, by the uninstructed observer. For these reasons we admit to our experimental *séances* only those who have sufficient preparatory knowledge to understand what may occur in them; so fully persuaded are we that any others would only lose their time, and make us lose ours.

35. Those who would acquire this preliminary knowledge should read, not only our own works, but, as far as possible, all the principal ones that have been written on the subject, both for and against it. They will thus be enabled to judge for themselves of the relative value of the views put forth in regard to it, and to meet all objections that may be brought forward against it.

CHAPTER 4

Theories

36. When the strange phenomena of spiritism were first produced, or, to speak more correctly, when they began to be renewed in these latter days, the first sentiment they excited was doubt in regard to their reality, and, still more so, in regard to their cause. Since their reality has been proved by unexceptionable testimony and by experiments that anyone may try for himself; each observer interprets them in his own way, in accordance with his own ideas, beliefs, or prejudices; hence have arisen various theories, which a comparative observation will enable us to estimate at their true value.

The adversaries of spiritism have imagined that, in this divergence of Opinion, they find an argument against it. They say: “The spiritists themselves are at variance!”

This is but a poor argument, for every new science is necessarily uncertain, until the facts which will settle a question have been brought together and arranged in their proper order. It is only in proportion as accumulated facts explain one another that premature conclusions are got rid of and unity is established, at least in regard to fundamental points, if not in every detail. Spiritism could not escape the common law, and, from its very nature, was especially liable to give rise to a diversity of interpretations. But even in this respect, we can confidently assert that it has proceeded faster than any of the other sciences, its elders, in all of which we find that opposite opinions are held by minds of the highest order.

37. In enumerating the theories hostile to spiritism, we will begin with those that may be called *theories of negation*; but, as we have discussed these theories in the *Introduction* to *The Spirits’ Book* and in the *Conclusion* of that work, as also in our short summary entitled *What is Spiritism*? We shall, in this place, merely recapitulate, in a few words, the most important of them.

Spirit-phenomena are of two sorts, *viz.*: the physical, and the intelligent. Those who do not admit the existence of spirits, because they admit of nothing outside of matter, naturally deny the indications of intelligence in the phenomena referred to. As regards the physical effects, they comment upon these from their own standpoint; and their arguments may be summed up under the four following heads:

38. *Theory of charlatanism*. Many of our antagonists attribute these effects to fraud because, they say, many of them can be imitated. This supposition would transform all spiritists into dupes, and all mediums into deceivers, without regard to their position, character, intellectual acquirements, or honorable antecedents; if it merited a reply, we should say that certain phenomena in physics are imitated by conjurors, and that this proves nothing against physical science. It is quite untenable when all suspicion of

fraud is rendered impossible by the character of the parties through whose agency, and in whose presence, the phenomena are manifested. We do not say that no Spirit manifestations have ever been imitated by charlatans, for abuses exist everywhere; but the abuse of a thing is no argument against the thing itself.

39. *Theory of weak-mindedness*. Some of our opponents put aside all suspicion of trickery, but assert that those who are not deceivers are themselves deceived; which is only *a* more civil way of saying that we are simpletons. When unbelievers are less choice in their forms of expression, they say plainly that those who believe in spiritism are mad thus assuming to themselves the exclusive possession of mental soundness.

This charge of insanity is the grand argument of those who can find no good reason for their opposition. But the frequency of this charge has made it so ridiculous that we need not waste our time in refuting it.

spiritists moreover, care little but for the attacks of their adversaries. They take their lot bravely, consoling themselves with the knowledge that plenty of people, of incontestable merit, are their companions in misfortune. It must really be admitted that their madness, if such it be, is a madness of a very singular character, for it lays hold, most often, of the enlightened classes, among which spiritism counts, at the present period, the immense majority of its adherents. If among the number, a few eccentric ones are to be found, such exceptions prove no more against spiritism than religious madness proves against religion, than music-madness proves against music, or than the fact that men have lost their wits in the study of mathematics proves against the truth of that great science. All ideas have had their fanatics; and that judgment must be obtuse indeed which confounds the exaggeration of a thing with the thing itself.

40. *Theory of hallucination*. Another opinion, less offensive, inasmuch as it bears on its surface a color of scientific discrimination, attributes these phenomena to illusion of the senses. Those who hold it say: “The observer may be a very respectable person; but he thinks he sees what he does not see. When he sees a table rise up and remain in the air, without anything to rest upon, the table does not really move at all; he sees it in the air by a sort of mirage, or by some effect of refraction, like that by which we see a star, or an object in the water, Out of its true position.” Such an illusion would be possible in point of fact, but witnesses of these phenomena are able to prove their objective nature, by passing under the suspended table, which would be difficult, if it had not left the floor. On the other hand, it often happens that the table is broken in its fall to the floor; can such a breakage be the effect of an optical illusion?

A well-known physiological cause may undoubtedly make us believe that we see a thing turn which does not move; or a man attacked with vertigo may fancy himself to turn when he is stationary; but when several people are witnesses to the same fact, can it be alleged that all such people are the victims of illusion?

41. *Theory of the cracking-muscle*. If the theory of illusion is inapplicable in regard to the evidence of sight, when several people see the same thing, it is equally inapplicable in regard to that of hearing, when the same sounds are heard by a whole assembly; for, under such circumstances, it is evidently impossible to attribute them to a deception of the senses. All idea of illusion must therefore be regarded as exploded; while, on the other hand, observation has proved that these occurrences are not due to any fortuitous or physical cause.

It is true that a learned surgeon has declared that the “spirit-rap” is produced by voluntary or involuntary contractions of the short tendon of the muscle of the instep. He enters into elaborate anatomical details, to show the way in which the mechanism of this tendon is made to produce those raps, to imitate the beating of a drum, and even to reproduce the rhythm of well-known tunes; from all of which he deduces the conclusion that people who believe they hear raps in a table are dupes, either of a mystification or of a delusion. Unfortunately for the author of this pretended discovery, his theory is far from being able to explain all the facts of the case. It is to be remarked, in the first place, that the people who rejoice in the singular ability of cracking at pleasure the short muscle of their instep, or any other muscle, and of playing tunes by this means, are exceedingly rare; while the ability of obtaining raps in a table is a very common one, and those who possess it do not usually possess the muscular gift in question. In the second place, the learned surgeon has forgotten to explain how this muscle can be made to crack by a person who does not move and how muscle-cracking, by one who is isolated from the table, can produce in it vibrations that are as sensible to the touch as to the ear; how the sounds thus produced can be repeated at the will of the company, on different parts of the table, on the other furniture, against the walls, the ceiling, etc.; how, in fine, the action of that muscle can be extended to a table that is not touched, and make it move.

But this pretended explanation, even if it explained the phenomena of the rapping, could not explain any of the other modes of communication. We therefore conclude that the learned gentleman has proclaimed a verdict without having examined the matter in dispute, and must be allowed to regret that scientific men should be in a hurry to give, in regard to what they do not understand, explanations disproved by the facts of the Case; whereas they, of all men, should be the most circumspect in laying down the law in regard to new subjects, because their knowledge has pushed back, for them, the barriers which separate the *known* and the *unknown*.

42. *Theory of physical causes*. We now emerge from the sphere of absolute negation. The reality of the phenomena being admitted, the first thought which naturally suggested itself, to those who recognized them as real, was to attribute them to magnetism, to electricity, or to some sort of fluidic action; in a word, to some purely physical cause. In this there was nothing irrational; and that explanation would have been generally adopted, if the

phenomena had been limited to purely mechanical effects. A circumstance which even seemed to corroborate this view was the fact, that, in certain cases, the power increased in proportion to the number of the sitters; each person might thus be considered as constituting one of the elements of a human electric battery. As previously remarked, the characteristic of a true theory is its capability of accounting for *all* the facts to which it refers; if contradicted by a single fact, the theory is seen to be erroneous or incomplete and this is just the case with the theory now cited. The phenomena observed were found to give signs of intelligence, by conforming to the will of the sitters and responding to their thought; thus proving that they proceeded from the action of an intelligent cause. This point ascertained, the phenomena could no longer be regarded as merely physical, or as being due to the action of a purely physical cause. The theory of the exclusive action of a physical agent as their source was thenceforth necessarily abandoned, and is no longer upheld except by people who argue à *priori*, and without having investigated. The chief point, therefore, is to obtain proof of intelligence in the phenomena we are about to consider, and proof will certainly be obtained by all who take the pains to investigate for themselves.

43. *Theory of reflection*. Proofs of intelligence being recognized in the phenomena, there remained the necessity of ascertaining the source of this intelligence.

Some thought it might be that of the medium, or of those present, reflecting itself, like the light, or like sonorous vibrations. The suggestion was plausible; experience alone could decide its value. And here let us remark that this theory is anti-materialistic; for if the intelligence of those present could thus reproduce itself, it must be admitted that there is in man a principle distinct from his organism.

If the thought expressed in the communications thus made had been always that of the people present, the theory of reflection would have been confirmed; but even in that case, would riot such phenomena have been of the deepest interest? Would not thought, exerting a reflex action on an inert body, and translating itself into sounds and movements, be something very remarkable, something worthy to excite the curiosity of scientific men? Why has such a subject been disdained by those who wear themselves out in searching after the properties of a nervous fiber?

Experience alone could show whether the theory of reflection was right or wrong; and experience has shown it to be wrong, for experience proves, by the most positive facts, that the thought expressed may be not only alien to that of the people present but in opposition to it, contradicting their preconceived ideas, and disappointing their expectation. When he who thinks *white* gets *black* for an answer, it is difficult for him to believe that he has come up with that answer. A point is often made by skeptics, of the similarity between the thought expressed and that of the people in the circle; but what does this prove, if not that those present may think like the

intelligence which communicates with them? It was never asserted that they are always of an opposite opinion. When, in conversation, your interlocutor expresses a thought analogous to your own, do you say that the thought comes from you? How, again, can reflection of thought explain the production of writing by people who do not know how to write replies of the widest philosophical scope obtained through illiterate people and answers given to questions propounded mentally, or spoken in a language unknown to the medium, and a thousand other facts, leaving no doubt as to the independence of the intelligence which manifests itself? The theory of reflection can only be held by those whose observation is of the most superficial and limited character.

If the presence of an outside intelligence is morally proved by the nature of the answers given, it is physically proved by the fact of direct writing; that is to Say, writing produced spontaneously, without pen or pencil, without contact, and in spite of all the precautions taken to render trickery impossible. The intelligent character of such a phenomenon being undeniable, that phenomenon must be due to something else than fluidic action; and the spontaneousness of the thought expressed, often disappointing our expectation and wandering away from the questions presented, renders it impossible for us to attribute its manifestation to any reflex action on the part of the people present.

The theory of reflection is particularly impolite in certain cases, as when, at a party of honorably minded people, communications are unexpectedly produced of a coarse, frivolous, or otherwise objectionable character. It would be paying a very poor compliment to such people, to assert that such communications come from them; and it is probable that, in such a case, each of them would promptly repudiate the implication

44. *Theory of the collective soul*. This explanation is a Variety of the preceding one. According to this theory, the soul of the medium alone manifests itself, but it identifies itself with that of several other living people, present or absent, and this union of souls forms a collective whole, combining the aptitudes, knowledge, and intelligence of each. Like many other theories, it is the expression of an individual

Opinion, and has made but few proselytes.

45. *Theory of somnambulism*. This theory has had many partisans, and even now has a few. Like the preceding one, it lays down, as a rule, that all intelligent communications have their source in the soul or Spirit of the medium but, in order to explain his power to treat on subjects beyond his knowledge, instead of the supposition of a multiple soul in the medium, it attributes this power to a momentary super excitement of his mental abilities, a sort of trance or ecstatic state, which exalts and develops his intelligence. It is impossible to deny that this super excitement really occurs in some cases; but it would only be necessary to see the majority of mediums at work, to be convinced that this theory cannot explain all the phenomena, and that such a state is the exception, and not the rule.

Mediums are far from having at all times an inspired or ecstatic air, which, by the way, they could easily assume, if playing a part; and how could we believe in this sort of inspiration, when we see a medium writing like a machine, without having the least consciousness of what he is writing, showing no emotion, paying no attention to what he is doing, often laughing and talking on all manner of subjects, and looking carelessly about him? We can understand a man's being in a state of trance, but we cannot comprehend how trance should make a man write who does not know how to write, or give communications through the tilting and rapping of tables, or the writing of planchettes and pencils. We shall refer, in a later part of this work, to the influence of the medium's ideas on the communications which he receives; but the proofs of the action of an intelligence independent of the medium are so incontestable that they leave us in no doubt in regard to it. The defect of the greater number of the theories broached by spiritists is the drawing of general conclusions from isolated cases.

46. *Pessimist theory*. Here we enter upon a new order of ideas. The intervention of an extraneous intelligence having been proved, the easiest method for learning the nature of this intelligence would undoubtedly have been to ask it what it was. But some people, not considering such a method of proceeding as offering a sufficient guarantee of the truthfulness of the reply, preferred to set the whole down to the devil; only the devil, or demons, according to their ideas, having the power of communicating with mankind. Although this theory has but few partisans nowadays, it did, nevertheless, for a short time, obtain a certain amount of credit, from the character of those who advocated it. It must, however, be borne in mind that the partisans of the demoniac theory ought not to be ranged among the adversaries of Spiritism, but quite the contrary. Whether the beings who make themselves known to us are demons or angels, they are extra-human beings; therefore, the admission of the possibility of demoniacal manifestations is a virtual admission of the possibility of communicating with the invisible world, or, at least, with a part of that world.

The theory of the exclusive communication of demons, however irrational, was evidently not incredible so long as spirits were looked upon as created beings, beyond the pale of humanity; but since it has been known that spirits are neither more nor less than the souls of deceased men and women, that theory has lost credit. The result of such an explanation came to this, *viz.*, that all souls are demons, though they should be those of a father, a son, or a friend, and that we, too, on dying, shall also become demons, which is neither flattering nor consoling; nor would it be easy to persuade a mother that the cherished child whom she has lost, and who comes after death to proffer tokens of its identity and affection, is a tool of Satan. It is true that, among spirits, there are some who are no better than what are called demons, but the reason of this is very simple, *viz.*, that there are in this world some very bad men, and that death does not change these

into good spirits all at once. The gist of the question under consideration is this – Are bad spirits the only ones able to communicate with us? To those who would answer this query in the affirmative, we beg to address the following questions:

(1) Are there good and evil Spirits?

(2) Is God more powerful than bad spirits, or than “demons,” if this be your mode of expression?

(3) If we affirm that the bad spirits alone communicate, we say, in other words, that good spirits cannot do so; if this were so, it must be so by the will of God, or contrary to that will. If it be contrary to God’s will, it proves that bad spirits are more powerful than God; if it be by God’s will, why, in His goodness, does He not permit good spirits to counterbalance the influence of the others?

(4) What proof have you of the impotence of good spirits in this respect?

(5) When reference is made to the wisdom of some of the communications, you reply that the devil assumes all sorts of masks, in order to deceive. We know by experience that there are hypocritical spirits, whose language wears a false varnish of excellence; but do you admit that ignorance can counterfeit knowledge, or an evil nature counterfeit virtue, without letting out something that betrays the fraud?

(6) If the devil alone has the power of communicating, he being the enemy of God and men, how is it that he advises us to pray to God, to submit ourselves to His will, to bear without murmuring the tribulations of life, to desire neither honors nor riches, to practice charity and all the maxims of Christ; in a word, to do all we possibly can to destroy the devil’s empire? If it be the devil who gives such counsels, it must be admitted, that, far from being so cunning as he is represented to be, he must be particularly short-sighted, thus to furnish arms against himself.

(7) If spirits communicate with us, it must be by the permission of God; and when we find that there are both bad and good communications, is it not more reasonable to suppose that God permits the one in order to try us, and the other, in order to counsel us for our good?

(8) What would you think of a father who should leave his child at the mercy of pernicious examples and evil counsels, and who should prevent him from holding intercourse with people who might turn him from evil? Can you believe that God would do what no good father, what no good man, would do?

(9) All religions recognize, as authentic, certain manifestations of saints, angels, etc., by apparitions, visions, and oral communications. Is not this recognition contradictory to the doctrine of the exclusive communication of demons?

We believe that some people have held this theory in all honesty; but we also think that others have upheld it in order to dissuade people from the study of spiritism, because of the evil communications to which we are exposed. By saying that the devil alone manifests, they hope to frighten

people, much as they would say to a child “Don’t touch that; it bums!” The intention may be praiseworthy, but the means employed are a failure; for the prohibition itself excites curiosity, and few are deterred by fear of the devil people want to see him, if only to find out what he is like, and are quite astonished to find him not so black as he had been painted.

May not another reason for this exclusive attribution of the phenomena in question to the devil be found in the persuasion of certain people that whoever differs with them in opinion must be in the wrong, and that, as the views expressed by some spirits are not in accordance with their own, those views can only be put forth by the devil?

If a Muslim should hear a spirit speak against the Koran, he would assuredly think it was a bad spirit; it would be the same with the Jew, in regard to certain points of the law of Moses. As for the Catholics, we have heard one affirm that the spirit who communicated could only be the devil, because he differed with him in regard to the temporal power of the Pope, although the spirit had exhorted to charity, tolerance, love of the neighbor, and abnegation of the things of this world, all of which are in accordance with the teachings of Christ.

Spirits being nothing but the souls of men, and men being imperfect, it follows that there are spirits equally imperfect, and whose character is reflected in their words.

That there are some who are evil, astute, and profoundly hypocritical, is an incontestable fact, and against these it is necessary to be on our guard; but, should we renounce society, because there are wicked men in the world? God has given us reason and judgment, in order that we may appreciate spirits as well as men. The best way to guard one’s self against the annoyances that may result from the practice of spiritism is not to interdict it, but to understand it. Imaginary danger does not frighten everyone, and such fear is soon got rid of; but the clear setting forth of a reality is comprehensible by all.

47. *Optimist theory*. While some people see in these phenomena only the action of demons, others only see that of good spirits; they suppose that souls, being disengaged from matter by death, see everything without a veil, and must therefore possess all science, and the highest wisdom. Their blind confidence in this supposed superiority of the beings of the invisible world has been a Source of deception to many people, who have learned at length, and to their cost, to distrust certain spirits as well as certain men.

48. *The uni-spiritist or mono-spiritist theory*, a variety of the optimist theory, consisting in the belief that one single spirit communicates with men, and that this Spirit is Christ, the Protector of the Earth. But as some communications are very trivial, while others are coarse, malevolent, and wicked, it would be a profanation to suppose that they emanate from the Spirit of Goodness. If those who hold this belief had never received any but irreproachable communications, we could understand their illusion; but the majority of them acknowledge that they have received some very bad ones,

which they explain by saying, that the Good Spirit has wished to test them by dictating absurdities. Thus, while some attribute all communications to the devil, who says good things to tempt us, others think that Jesus alone manifests Himself; and that
He says evil things to test us. Between two opinions so opposed to each other, who, or what, shall decide? Evidently, common sense and experience. We say *experience*, because such exclusive ideas can only be held by those who have seen and observed very little.
When we bring forward, in opposition to these ideas, facts of identity, attesting the presence of relations, friends, or acquaintances, whether through written manifestations, by vision, or otherwise, they reply that these are always produced by the same spirit, who is the devil according to some, Christ according to others, and who is thus seen to assume all forms; but they do not tell us why other spirits cannot communicate, nor why the Spirit of Truth should deceive us, by presenting Himself under false appearances; for instance, deceiving a poor mother, by making her believe, through a lie, that He is the child for whom she weeps. Reason refuses to admit that a holy and exalted spirit could stoop to play such a comedy.
Besides, does not the denial of the possibility of all other communications rob spiritism of its most precious attribute, the consolation of the afflicted? But the theory alluded to is too irrational to bear serious examination.
49. *The multi-spiritist or poly-spiritist theory*. All the explanations we have passed in review, not excepting those of the negative order, are grounded on the observation of certain facts but facts that have been seen singularly and interpreted incorrectly. If a house is red on one side and white on the other, those who have only seen one side will affirm it to be red, or white, according to the side they have seen. Both will be right, and both wrong; but he who has seen the house on both sides will say that it is red and white, and he alone will be right. So it is with spiritism; what is said of it may be true in certain respects, and may yet be false if we generalize what is only partial, if we take for a rule what is only an exception, or regard as a whole what is only a part. It is for this reason we say that whoever would study spiritism seriously must see much of it, and for a long time together; time alone will give him opportunities for seizing upon details, for remarking delicate shadings, and for observing a multitude of characteristic facts which will be for him so many rays of light; but, if he stops at the surface, he exposes himself to the danger of forming an opinion that will be premature, and consequently erroneous. Let us now proceed to sum up the general principles that have been deduced from the widest observation and study of the phenomena we are considering, and that may be regarded as forming the general basis of spiritist belief; all other interpretations being merely the expression of individual opinions:
(1) Spirit-phenomena are produced by extra-corporeal intelligences; that is to say, by spirits.

(2) Spirits constitute the invisible world; they are everywhere; the infinity of pace is peopled by them; they are always around us, and we are always in intimate union with some of them.
(3) Spirits act incessantly upon the physical world, and upon the moral world, and are one of the powers of nature.
(4) Spirits are not beings of a different order from ourselves; they are the souls of those who have lived upon the earth or in other worlds, and who have thrown off their corporeal body: where it follows that the souls of men are spirits in flesh, and that we, on dying, become spirits.
(5) Spirits are of every degree of goodness and of badness, of knowledge and of ignorance.
(6) Spirits are submitted to the law of progress, and all will arrive at perfection; but, as they possess free will, they arrive at perfection more or less rapidly, according to the amount of effort and determination put forth by them.
(7) Spirits are happy or Unhappy, in proportion to the good or the evil which they have done during their earthly life, and the amount of progress they have made.
Perfect, unmixed felicity is the heritage of those spirits alone who have arrived at the supreme degree of perfection.
(8) All spirits, under certain conditions, can manifest themselves to men; the number of those able to communicate with us is unlimited.
(9) Spirits communicate through the agency of mediums who serve them as instruments and interpreters.
(10) The superiority or inferiority of Spirits is shown by their language; the good give only good Counsels, and say only what is good: everything about them attests their elevation. Bad Spirits deceive, and their statements usually bear the stamp of ignorance and imperfection.
Knowledge of the different degrees passed through by spirits is indispensable to the comprehension of the nature of those who manifest themselves, with their good or evil qualities.
50. *Theory of the material soul*. This theory consists solely in a special opinion, with regard to the nature of the soul, according to which, the soul and the perispirit are not two distinct things; or, to speak more strictly, the perispirit is nothing more than *the soul itself*, purifying itself gradually by successive transmigrations, as alcohol becomes purified by repeated distillations; while the spiritist doctrine regards the perispirit as being only a *fluidic envelope* of the soul or spirit. The perispirit being matter, although of very etherealized nature, the soul would be, according to this view, of a physical nature, more or less material according to the degree of its purification.
This view of the nature of the soul and the perispirit does not invalidate any of the fundamental principles of spiritist doctrine, for it makes no change in the soul’s destiny nor in the conditions of its future happiness, the soul and the perispirit forming a whole, under the name of *spirit*, as the germ and

the surrounding matter form one, under the name of *fruit*; the difference consisting in the consideration of the whole being as homogeneous, instead of being formed of two distinct parts.

This question, as we see, is of little consequence; and we should not have touched upon it, had we not met with people inclined to regard, as the beginning of a new school, what is really nothing more than a mere interpretation of words. The opinion now referred to is held by very few; but were it even more general, it would not make any separation among spiritists, any more than do, among natural philosophers, the two theories of the emission and undulation of light. Those who endeavor to sow dissension, by attributing an undue importance to details, prove that they attach more value to accessories than to the thing itself, and that they are urged to discussion by imperfect spirits, for elevated spirits never breathe acrimony and discord. For this reason, we would urge all true spiritists to be on their guard against suggestions tending to disunion among them. Let us attach no more importance to details than they deserve, and let us think more of essentials, on which we are agreed, than of minor points, in regard to which any differences of opinion are comparatively unimportant.

This view of the matter having been thus clearly set forth, we nevertheless consider it to be our duty to state, in a few words, our reason for regarding the soul and the perispirit as being two distinct entities. The fact of this distinction is asserted by the enlightened spirits whose instructions have directed us in our labors, and who have never varied in this respect (we say "enlightened spirits," because there are among spirits many who know no more, or know even less, than men know); while the contrary theory has its rise in a merely human conception. We have neither invented nor imagined the perispirit; spirits revealed its existence to us, and observation has confirmed the statements thus made to us *(The Spirits' Book*, 93). Its existence is shown moreover, by the sensations of the spirits themselves *(The Spirits' Book*, 257) and above all by the phenomena of tangible apparitions, which would imply, according to the other opinion, the aggregation and subsequent disintegration of the constituents of the soul itself. It would imply, still further, that matter, palpable to the senses, is itself the intelligent principle, a supposition no more rational than that which should confound the body with the soul, or our coat with our body. As to the particular nature of the soul, *that* is unknown to us. When it is stated to be *immaterial* the statement must be taken in a relative sense, and not absolutely, for absolute immateriality would be nothingness, whereas the soul, or spirit, is *something*. But we must necessarily admit that its essence is of so subtle a nature as to have no analogy with what we call matter; and that, from this point of view, we may call it *immaterial*.

51. The following is the answer given by a spirit to a question on this subject:

"What some call 'the perispirit' is the same as what others call the soul's 'fluidic envelope.' It is formed of the fluid which gives perfectibility to our

senses, and extension to our view and our ideas. I speak of elevated spirits, for, as regards inferior spirits, the fluids inherent in them are altogether earthly, and therefore material, as you see; hence their sufferings of hunger, cold, etc., sufferings that the higher spirits cannot feel, because, with them, the terrestrial fluids are purified around the seat of their consciousness, that is to say, their soul. The soul, in order to progress, always requires an agent, for the soul without an agent is nothing, or rather, I should say, cannot be conceived of by you. The perispirit, for us, spirits in the state of erraticity, is the agent by which we communicate with you, whether indirectly, by means of your body, or, by means of your perispirit, directly with your soul; hence the infinite diversity of mediums and communications. As for the scientific explanation of the pen spirit, that is to say, the definition of its essence, that is quite another thing. Let the moral aspect of the question suffice to you for the present beyond that, any inquiry would involve disquisitions upon the nature of fluids, inexplicable for you at this time, because your physical sciences are not yet sufficiently advanced. But science will ascertain this point, in time, with the aid of light derived from spiritism. The perispirit can vary and change indefinitely; the soul is thought, and its nature does not change. Do not attempt to go any further in this direction; for the nature of the soul is a point that cannot be explained. Do you suppose that we are not seeking, just as you are? You are searching after the *perispirit*; we, meanwhile, are searching after the *soul*. Therefore, *wait*.

LAMMENAIS.

If spirits who may be considered as advanced have not yet been able to fathom the essential nature of the soul, how, indeed, can we hope to do so? The endeavor to scrutinize the principle of things which, as is remarked in *The Spirits' Book* (17, 49), are beyond the scope of our present abilities, is but a loss of time. To attempt to pry into things which are nut yet within the reach of humanity, by the aid of spiritism, is to turn it from its true object; it is to act like the child, who would fain know as much as the man. Let us use spiritism for our moral improvement; that is the essential point; the rest is too often but sterile curiosity prompted by pride, the satisfaction of which would not advance us a single step; for the only true method of advancement is to become better. The spirits who have dictated the book which bears their name have proved their wisdom by restricting their teachings, as regards the principle of things, within limits that we are not yet able to overstep; leaving to presumptuous spirits, with their theories, the responsibility of premature and erroneous statements, specious, but hollow, which will one day disappear in the light of reason, as so many merely human lucubration's have already done. Spirits have only given us such information as is necessary to enable us to comprehend the future which awaits us, and thus to encourage us in well doing.

PART 2 – SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS

CHAPTER 1

Action Of Spirits On Matter

52. Materialistic opinions being put aside, as condemned at once by reason and by facts, we have now to inquire whether the soul, after death, can manifest itself to the living.

Let us begin by considering whether there can be any reason why intelligent beings, living, as it were, in our midst, although, from their nature, we are unable to see them, should not be able to manifest themselves in some way or other. Common sense tells us that there can be no á *priori* impossibility of their being able to do this; and it is something that the supposition is seen to be not intrinsically unreasonable. On the other hand, the belief that they can thus manifest themselves is indigenous among all nations, and has existed everywhere, and at all epochs; and it is evident that no intuition could be so general, or manifest such vitality, in all ages, without having some foundation.

Moreover, this belief is sanctioned by the testimony of Holy Writ and by the Fathers of the Church; and only the materialistic skepticism of our age could have relegated it into the category of superstitions.

But these are only moral considerations. One cause has Contributed beyond all others to develop skepticism in a positive age like ours; an age in which a reason must be given for every statement, and in which people must know the “why” and the “how” of everything. That cause is the general ignorance of mankind in regard to the nature of spirits and of the means by which they are able to manifest themselves. Let the world acquire this knowledge, and the fact of spirit-manifestation will be seen to have nothing surprising in it, and will take its place with all other natural facts.

53. The very idea that people usually form respecting spirits renders the question of their manifestation incomprehensible; for these manifestations can only occur through the action of spirits on matter, and as it is generally supposed that spirits are divested of all matter, it is asked, with some show of reason, “How can a spirit act on material things?” Here is the general error, for a spirit is not an abstraction, but is a definite being, limited, and Circumscribed. The spirit incarnated in the human body constitutes the man’s soul; when the spirit quits that body at death, he does not emerge from it stripped of all covering. All spirits assure us that they preserve their human form and, in fact, when they appear to us, they do so in the form by which we knew them during their human life.

If we observe people attentively at the moment of their death, we find that their soul is in a state of confusion; their perceptions are muddled; they see their bodies, whole, or mutilated, according to the manner of their decease; and, at the same time, these souls see themselves, and feel that they are still living. Something tells them that the body lying there is *their* body, and

they feel a difficulty in comprehending how it can be that they are separated from it. They Continue to see themselves under their previous form, and this sight produces in some of them, for a certain period, a singular illusion, *viz.*, that of believing themselves to be still in the flesh. They have to gain experience of their new state, before they can become convinced of its reality.

When they have got over this first moment of perplexity, they learn to look upon their corpse as an old garment which they have slipped off; and are not sorry to be quit of

They feel themselves to be lighter, and to have dropped a burden; they no longer suffer from physical pains, and are delighted with their power of rising into the atmosphere and gliding through space, just as, when in the body, they have often done in their dreams.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding that they have lost their body, the souls retain their personality; they retain their human form, but a form which neither troubles nor embarrasses them; and they also retain the consciousness of their *self*, and of their individuality. What must we conclude from this? Why, that the soul does not leave its *all* in the coffin, but that it carries *something* away with it.

54. Numerous observations, and unanswerable facts, of which we shall speak further on, have led us to this conclusion, *viz.*, that there exist in man three things; 1st, the *soul* or *spirit*, the intelligent principle in which resides the moral sense; 2nd, the *body*, a gross material envelope, with which the soul is temporarily clothed, for the accomplishment of certain Providential ends; 3rd, the *perispirit*, a fluidic envelope, which is semimaterial, and constitutes the link between the soul and the body.

Death is the destruction, or rather the disaggregation, of the grosser envelope, from which the soul withdraws itself; the other envelope disengages itself from the grosser one, and accompanies the soul; so that the soul always possesses an envelope. This latter, fluidic, ethereal, vaporous, and invisible to us in its normal state, is none the less *matter*, although, up to the present time, we have not been able to seize it, so as to submit it to analysis.

This inner envelope of the soul, or perispirit, exists, then. during our corporeal life; it is the go-between or intermediary for all the sensations experienced by the spirit, the means by which the spirit acts upon its fleshly organs and transmits its will to all that is exterior to itself. To employ a comparison borrowed from matter, it is the electric conducting-wire which serves for the transmission of thought it is, in short, that mysterious, inexplicable agent which we call the nervous fluid, and which plays so important a part in the human economy, but of which we take too little account in our discussion of physiological and pathological questions. Medical students, confining their researches to the physical elements, leave out of their calculations an incessant cause of vital action, the recognition of which would throw a flood of light on the facts with which they deal. But

this is not the place to enter upon this highly important subject; we would merely point out, in passing, that knowledge of the perispirit is the key to a host of physiological and physical problems, until now unexplained.

The perispirit is not one of those mere hypotheses to which science sometimes finds it necessary to have recourse, in order to explain a fact; its existence has not only been revealed by spirits, but is proved by observation, as we shall show further on. For the present, and not to anticipate facts which will be brought forward in due time, we confine ourselves to saying that, whether during its union with its fleshly body, or after its disjunction therefrom, the soul is never separated from its perispirit.

55. It has been said that the spirit is a flame, a spark this should be understood of the soul, properly so-called, the intellectual and moral principle, to which we cannot attribute any determinate form; but, whatever its degree of advancement, the soul is always clothed with an envelope, or *perispirit*, the nature of which becomes more and more etherealized, in proportion as the soul itself becomes purer and raises itself higher and higher in the hierarchy of spirits. This conjunction of the soul and perispirit is as absolute as that of the idea of *spirit* with the idea of form, so that we cannot conceive of the one without the other.

The perispirit is therefore an integral part of the spirit, as the body is an integral part of the man; but the perispirit, alone, is no more the spirit, than the body, alone, is the man for the perispirit does not think; it is, to the soul, what the body is to the man; it is the agent, the instrument, of the soul’s action.

56. The form of the perispirit is the human form; and, as previously stated, when it appears to us, it generally resembles the form by which we knew the spirit, when in the flesh. It might thence be supposed that the perispirit, being disengaged from every particle of flesh, must have molded itself in some way upon the body, and thus have preserved its impress; but this does not appear to be the case. The human form, though differenced in some details, and with certain organic modifications necessitated by the nature of the sphere in which the soul is called to exist, appears to be common to the inhabitants of all the globes of the universe; this, at least, is what spirits tell us; an this form appears to be equally that of all spirits when not incarnated, and possessing only their perispirit. It is also the form under which, through all tune, angels, or pure spirits, have been represented; from all of which we may conclude that the human form is the type of every human being, to whatever degree he may have attained. But the subtle matter of the perispirit has neither the tenacity nor the rigidity of compact bodily matter; it is, if we may so express ourselves, flexible and expansive, and therefore, the form assumed by the perispirit, although similar to that of the body, is not absolutely the same. It yields to the will of the spirit, who can give it any similitude he pleases whereas the resistance of the solid envelope of flesh renders such changes of similitude impossible. Freed from

the “vile body” which once compressed it, the perispirit spreads, contracts, or otherwise transforms itself; accomplishing every metamorphosis determined at the moment by the spirit’s will. It is through this property of his fluidic envelope that the spirit who desires to make himself known can, when necessary, assume the exact appearance he had when living, and can even show the bodily defects, or other peculiarities, that may serve to identify him.

Spirits, as we have seen, are beings like ourselves, and constitute a population environing us on every side, though invisible to us in our normal state; we say, our *normal* state, because, as we shall see, this invisibility is not absolute.

57. Let us return to our consideration of the nature of the perispirit, essential to the explanation we are about to give. We have said that, although fluidic, it is nonetheless a species of matter, as is proved by the fact of tangible apparitions, to which we have now to recur. Through the influence of certain mediums, we have seen hands appear, with all the properties of living hands; hands that were warm, that we could touch, that offered the resistance of a solid body, that could grasp ours, and then suddenly vanish, like a shadow. The intelligent action of these hands, which, evidently, by their execution of certain movements, obey a will, playing airs on an instrument, etc. proves that they are visible portions of an invisible, intelligent being. Their tangibleness, their temperature, in a word, the impression they make on our senses (for we have seen them leave marks on the skin, deal painful blows, or give the gentlest caresses), all prove that they consist of some sort of matter. Their instantaneous disappearance proves, still further, that this matter is eminently subtle, and that it has the property (like that of certain substances already known to us) of passing alternately from a solid to a fluidic state, and *vice versa*.

58. The peculiar nature of the soul, properly so-called, that is to say, of the thinking being, is entirely unknown to us: it only reveals itself by its acts, and these acts cannot strike our material senses, unless through a material intermediary. The spirit, then, has need of matter, in order to act upon matter, he has, as his direct instrument, his perispirit, just as a man has his body; and this perispirit is matter, as we are about to show. He has, as his intermediary agent, the universal fluid; a sort of vehicle on which he acts, as we act upon the air, in order to produce certain effects, by the aid of expansion, compression, propulsion, or vibration.

The action of a spirit on matter is easily understood when thus explained; and we see that all the effects produced by that action belong to the order of natural phenomena, and have nothing of the miraculous about them. They have only appeared to be supernatural, because people were ignorant of their cause; their cause known, they no longer appear to be prodigies, and that cause is found in the semimaterial properties of the perispirit. All this is only a new order of facts, explained by a new law, and about which,

ere long, people will feel no more wonder than they now feel at correspondence by the electric telegraph.

59. It may perhaps be asked, how it is that a spirit, by the aid of matter so subtle, can act upon bodies which are both heavy and compact, raise tables, etc. But no scientific man could make such an objection; for, without reference to any special properties which this novel agent may possess and of which we are ignorant, have we not, before our eyes, analogous examples? Is it not in the most rarefied gases, and in imponderable fluids, that industry finds its most powerful motors? When we see the air overthrowing edifices, vapor dragging enormous masses, powder, transformed into gas, blowing up rocks, electricity splitting trees and piercing walls, why should it be thought strange that a spirit, with the aid of his perispirit, should raise a table, especially when we know that this very perispirit may also become visible and tangible, and behave like a solid body?

CHAPTER 2

Physical Manifestations – Table Turning

60. We give the term *physical manifestations* to those phenomena which impress our senses, such as the production of sounds, and the movement and displacement of solid bodies. Some of the above are spontaneous, and independent of our wills, while others may be called forth by us. It is of the latter that we have now to speak.

The simplest, and one of the earliest observed, of these manifestations, was the circular movement of a table. This movement may be produced in any other object; but a table being the one with which most people make the trial, because the most convenient object for the purpose, the expression "table-turning" has come into general use to denote this particular phase of the manifestations we are considering.

When we say that this phenomenon was one of the earliest observed, we mean, with respect to what has occurred in these latter days; for it is quite certain that all kinds of spirit-manifestation were known in ancient times: nor could it be otherwise, because, being due to the action of natural causes, they could not but occur in all ages.

Tertullian speaks explicitly of tables turning, and making themselves understood by words.

This phenomenon, for a time, excited the curiosity of drawing rooms. People then grew tired of it, and took up some other amusement, because it really was, for them, only an amusement. There were two reasons for this abandonment of the new plaything; first, fashion, in the case of the frivolous, who rarely follow up the same amusement two winters together, but who, wondrous event in the lives of such people actually consecrated three or four winters to this one: and next, in the case of serious observers, the fact that results of a highly important nature had been elicited from this seemingly frivolous diversion, so that they, too, soon neglected "table-turning," because they were now busy with its consequences, the importance of which they had recognized. This is the whole secret of the apparent neglect of the tables, about which the scoffers scoffed so loudly.

Humble as such a beginning may appear, the turning of tables was none the less the groundwork, the starting point, of the great spiritist movement of the present day, and on this account deserves a passing notice. Moreover, the results obtained through tables present the phenomena under an aspect of such simplicity that the study of their cause is rendered comparatively easy; and, as all the modern phenomena proceed from the same source, the ascertainment of the cause of the movement of tables will give us the key to the far more complicated manifestations which have since occurred.

61. In order to produce the phenomenon referred to, the presence of one or two people endowed with a special aptitude, and who are called *Mediums*, is necessary.

The number of cooperators is of no importance, except that, when there are a good many, some of them may be found to be mediums. With regard to those of the company who are not mediums, their presence is of no use, and may even be a hindrance, through the qualities of mind or of temperament which they bring into the circle.

The qualities of mediums are various. Psychic power is sometimes very strong, producing strongly marked effects; a single individual who is really a powerful medium often producing more effect, alone, than twenty others united. If such a one lays his hands on the table for an instant, it immediately begins to move, rising up, turning over, spinning round with great velocity, or performing a variety of irregular and often violent motions.

62. There is no outward indication of psychic ability; experience alone is the true indicator of its existence. All that is to be done is for people to sit round a table, placing the palms of their hands *flat* upon it, without pressure or muscular movement. At first, when everyone was ignorant of the cause of the phenomena, various precautions were thought necessary, as, for example, the placing of the sexes alternately round the table, or the linking together of the little fingers of the parties operating, so as to form an uninterrupted chain. This last condition was thought to be necessary, because it was supposed that a sort of electric current was thus established; but such precautions are now seen to be unimportant. All that is really necessary is patience. The phenomena may occur in a few minutes, or may require half an hour or an hour for their development, according to the amount of psychic power in the people composing the circle.

63. The form and substance of the table, the presence of metals, jewels, silk, etc., the time of day, the amount of light, etc., are of no importance. The size of the table may be of some moment; but only when the medium’s power is insufficient to vanquish the material resistance offered by the weight of the table employed. When psychic power is strong, even in the case of a young child, it will suffice to move, or even lift, an enormously heavy table; while, on the contrary, people not endowed with that peculiar power would produce no effect whatever on the lightest.

The moving of a table is usually preceded by a slight creaking, and by a sort of shudder, that seems to occur in the fibers of the wood, and is felt under the hands of all present. The table then appears to be making an effort to move; and a rotator movement is gradually established, and is sometimes accelerated to such a degree, and the table spins round so rapidly, that those present can only follow it with difficulty. In some cases, when the movement has once been established, the experimenters may take their hands off the table, which continues to move in various directions, without any human contact.

Sometimes the table tilts upon one Bide, poising itself; first on one leg, and then on another, after which it gently subsides into its natural position. Sometimes it sways backwards and forwards, as though imitating the

pitching and rolling of a ship. At other times – but, for this, the medium must be a powerful one – the table rises entirely from the floor, and remains in the air, with nothing to rest on, rising, perhaps, to the very ceiling, so that people can stand or walk under it, and then gently lets itself down, with a fluttering movement, like that of a sheet of paper, or falls to the floor with a crash, and, perhaps, is broken by the fall. The sudden smashing of a solid oak or mahogany table, of a couple of hundred weight or so, is surely sufficient proof that the parties present are not the victims of any optical illusion.

64. Another phenomenon of frequent occurrence, according to the nature of the medium, is the production of raps that seem to be made in the tissue of the wood, without the table's moving at all; these raps, sometimes very faint and gentle, at others, extremely loud, are also often heard in the other furniture of the room, in the doors, walls, or floor: a phenomenon to which we shall presently recur. When these raps occur in the table, they produce a very perceptible vibration, which is felt distinctly by the finger, and is equally apparent to the ear, on placing one's head upon the table.

CHAPTER 3

Intelligent Manifestations

65. In all that we have just passed in review, it must be admitted that there is nothing to prove the intervention of any occult intelligence, nothing that might not be explained by the supposition of a magnetic or electric current, or the sole action of some known or unknown fluid. Such was, in fact, the first explanation suggested in regard to these phenomena, and it seemed to be a very reasonable one. But new facts soon showed its insufficiency, for these new facts gave proof of intelligence; and, *as every intelligent effect must have an intelligent cause*, it became evident, that, even admitting the action of electricity or any other fluid, the action of some intelligent agent must also be admitted. But what was this intelligent agent? – What was the nature of the intelligence whose cooperation in the production of these phenomena had now become evident?

66. For a phenomenon to prove the action of intelligence, it is not necessary that it should be eloquent, witty, or even wise; it is sufficient that it should give evidence of free and voluntary action, expressive of intention, and transmitting or replying to a thought. If we see a weathercock turned by the wind, we know that it obeys only a mechanical impulsion; but if; in these movements, we detected any thing that appeared to be intentional, anything in the nature of signals – for example, if it turned quickly or slowly, to the right or to the left, at our command – we should be forced to acknowledge, not that the weathercock was intelligent, but that it was submitted to the action of an intelligence. And this was the conclusion forced upon observers by the movement of the tables.

67. We have seen that a table may move, raise itself up, and strike on the floor, under the influence of one or more mediums. The first evidence of intelligence that was remarked, in connection with these movements, was the fact that they were obedient to the command of the operators: thus, without changing its place, a table would raise, alternately, one or other of its legs, as required, or would strike the floor with it a determinate number of times, in answer to a question. At other times, the table, without being touched by any of the people present, would move about the room of itself; turning to the right or the left, backwards or forwards, and executing various other movements, at their order.

68. By means of the raps of which we have spoken, manifestations still more clearly indicative of intelligence were obtained. Sounds were produced like the beat of the drum, like file and platoon firing, like a cannonade; now the grating of a saw would be heard, and anon, the blows of a hammer; or the raps would imitate the movement of well-known airs, or beat time to tunes sung, or played, by the experimenters. People then began to see that, as some occult intelligence was evidently at work, it ought to be able to reply

to questions susceptible of being answered by a given number of raps or tilting, previously agreed upon, as meaning yes, or “no.”

69. The experience of tens of thousands of people, in every country, left no doubt as to the reality and intelligence of these communications; but this intelligence was generally supposed to be that of the medium, the questioner, or the people composing the circle in which they were obtained. When it was ascertained that the raps were not made by the medium, it was suggested that they must be made by his thought; but the idea of intelligence reflecting itself; so to say, in a piece of wood, of thought producing raps and motions in a table, was felt to be an explanation even more astounding than the phenomena themselves, and the latter speedily showed it to be inadmissible. For, as previously stated, the communications were often directly opposed to the opinions and sympathies of the medium, or beyond the grasp of his intellectual abilities, and were sometimes conveyed in a language of which the medium was ignorant, or referred to matters unknown to the whole party. Such instances have now become so numerous that almost all of those who have had even a slight experience of spirit-communications could probably adduce a great number of them.

We will cite, in this place, only one instance of the character now alluded to; a fact that was related to us by one of the people who witnessed its occurrence.

70. On board a ship of the Imperial French Navy, stationed in Chinese waters, every soul, from the officers to the cabin boys, had taken up the amusement of “talking with tables.” One day, it occurred to some of them to address the spirit of a former lieutenant of the same vessel, who had died two years before. He responded, and, after several communications which struck them all with astonishment, he gave the following message by raps “I beseech you to pay at once, to the Captain, the sum of – (mentioning the amount), that I owe to him. I am sorry that it was not in my power to repay it before I died.” No one on board knew anything of the matter; the Captain himself had forgotten the debt thus alluded to, and which was a very trifling one; but, on searching his account-book, he found a mention of a loan made by him to this lieutenant, the amount being exactly as stated by the table. Of whose “thought,” we would ask, was the knowledge thus displayed a reflection?

71. The employment of the letters of the alphabet, though a very important step in advance, was still but a slow and roundabout method of communication; but it nevertheless soon came into general use, and many highly interesting revelations concerning the invisible world were thus obtained. But the spirits themselves speedily suggested other means of communication, and, by their directions, the practice of writing was next brought into use.

The first written communications were obtained by attaching a pencil to the foot of a toy-table, placed upon a sheet of paper. The table, set in motion by the influence of a medium, began by tracing letters, then words and

phrases. This method was successively simplified, first, by making use of light baskets, boxes made of cardboard, and planchettes; and next, by finding that these objects were mere pencil-holders, and might all be dispensed with, and the pencil held the usual way, in the hand, which, moved and guided by an involuntary impulsion, was made to write, without the concurrence either of the will or of the thought of the medium. Thenceforth, communication was held as freely with the world of spirits as with people in the flesh.

We shall discuss the different methods of communication, explaining them in detail, in another part of the present work; we have only wished, in this rapid sketch, to record the succession of facts which have gradually led up to a recognition of the intervention of unseen intelligences, otherwise called “spirits,” in the production of the phenomena we are considering.

* This was accordingly done; and, from the rudimentary attempts at conversation which were all that could be made through those monosyllabic signs, people soon went on to the use of the alphabet, recited by one of the sitters, the unseen intelligence indicating, by a rap or tilt, the letter of the word or phrase to be communicated. Messages and statements, often of considerable length and covering varied and interesting subjects, were obtained

CHAPTER 4

Theory of Physical Manifestations

Movements and levitation – Sounds – Temporary increases and decreases of the weight of bodies.

72. The existence of spirits being proved by reasoning and by facts, as well as their power of acting upon matter, we have now to ascertain the way in which this power operates, and the means by which spirits move tables and other inert bodies.

In regard to these points, a supposition presented itself spontaneously to our own mind, and we held it for a time; but, as it was combated by spirits, who gave us an explanation of the matter altogether different from the one which had occurred to us, it is evident that this explanation was not of our inventing. The idea that had first occurred to us may probably have occurred to many others also; as for the explanation given by the spirits, we do not think it would ever have come into the head of any human being. It will easily be seen how very superior it is to our own idea, although not so simple, because it explains a vast number of other facts which could not have been satisfactorily explained by our own idea.

73. When we had arrived at a knowledge of the nature of spirits, of their human form, of the semi-material properties of the perispirit, and of the mechanical action that the perispirit can exercise over matter – when we had seen their fluidic hands, often as tangible as human ones, taking hold of various objects, and Carrying them about, it was only natural to infer from all this that the spirit simply made use of its hands when it turned a table, and that it raised a table into the air by the action of its arms. But if so, where was the need of a medium? Could not the spirit act alone? The medium, as we know, often places his hands the wrong way to help the movement, and sometimes does not even put them on the table at all; he therefore cannot assist the spirit by any muscular action. How was this difficulty to be explained? We will let this question be answered by the spirits whom we have interrogated in regard to it.

74. The following replies were given by the spirit of Saint Louis; they have since been confirmed by many others: *

(1) Is the universal fluid an emanation of the Divinity?

“No.”

(2) Is it a creation of the Divinity?

“All is created, except God.”

(3) Is the universal fluid the universal element? “Yes, it is the elementary principle of all things.”

(4) Has it any relation to the electric fluid, the effects of which we know?

“It is its element.”

(5) What is the state in which the universal fluid presents itself to us in its greatest simplicity?

“To find it in its absolute simplicity, we must trace it up to the spirits who are completely purified; in your world it is always more or less modified for the formation of the compact matter which encompasses you; but what you call *the animal-magnetic fluid* is the universal fluid in the simplest state in which it can be known to you.”

(6) It has been said that the universal fluid is the source of life; is it also the source of intelligence?

“No; this fluid only vitalizes matter.”

(7) The fluid of which the perispirit is composed appears to exist, in connection with our earth, in a state of condensation which identifies it, up to a certain point, with matter, properly so-called. Is it so?

“Yes but only, as you say, up to a certain point; for it has not all the properties of matter; it is more or less condensed, according to the nature of each world.”

(8) How does a spirit effect the movement of a solid body?

“He combines a portion of the universal fluid with the fluid which is thrown off to this end by the medium.”

(9) Do spirits raise tables with the aid of their limbs rendered solid by some process known to them?

“Our answer to this question will not give you the confirmation you are wishing for. When a table moves under your hands, the spirit who is acting upon it draws from the universal fluid the means of vitalizing this table with artificial life. The table being thus prepared, the spirit attracts it, and moves it, under the influence of his own fluid, thrown off by an exertion of his will. When the mass which he desires to move is too heavy for the spirit, he calls to his aid other spirits, of the same degree as himself; On account of his ethereal nature, a spirit cannot act upon gross matter without an intermediary, that is to say, without the link which unites spirit to matter; this link, which is what you call the perispirit, gives you the key to all the materialized spirit-phenomena. I think I have expressed myself clearly enough to be understood.”

Remark – We would call attention to tills first phrase: “*Our answer to this question will not give you the confirmation you are wishing for*.” The spirit evidently understood what we were driving at, and that all our previous questions had been put in order to lead up to it. He therefore alluded to our thought, which, in fact, anticipated an answer very different from the one we got; for, what we had expected was the confirmation of our own idea with regard to the manner in which spirits move tables and other objects.

(10) When a spirit calls other spirits to his aid, are they his inferiors or are they under his orders?

“They are almost always his equals; and they often come of their own accord.”

(11) Are all spirits capable of producing phenomena of this kind?

“The spirits who produce effects of this kind are always inferior spirits, who are not yet entirely disengaged from material influences.”

(12) We can understand that superior spirits do not occupy themselves with things beneath them; but we wish to ask, whether, being more dematerialized than the others, they would have the power of producing such effects, if they wished to do so? “They have moral force, as the others have physical force; when they want the latter, they make use of those who possess it. Have you not been told that they make use of inferior spirits as you make use of porters?”

Remark – It has been said that the density of the perispirit, if one may so express it, varies according to the condition of each world but it appears that it also varies, in the same world, according to the state of each individual. In the case of spirits who are advanced *morally*, it is more subtle, and approaches nearer to that of the higher spirits; with spirits of lower degree, on the contrary, it approaches to the condition of matter, and this Is why low spirits retain terrestrial illusions for so long a time. Such spirits think and act just as if they were still in the flesh; they have the same desires, we might almost say, the same sensualities. This grossness of the perispirit, giving it more *affinity* with matter, renders the inferior spirits more fit for physical manifestations. It is, with spirits, just as it is with a man who, in this world, is accustomed to working with his intellect, and whose body, being therefore more delicate, cannot carry a heavy burden, like a porter. The matter of such a man’s body is somewhat less compact, and, his organs having less of the nervous fluid, he has less power of resistance. The perispirit being to the spirit what the body is to the man, and its density being in proportion to the spirit’s inferiority, it replaces, in lower spirits, the muscular force possessed by men of corresponding degree; that is to say, it gives them the denser kinds of fluids that are necessary for the physical manifestations, and thus gives them more power to produce such manifestations than is possessed by those whose nature is more ethereal. If an elevated spirit desires to produce effects of this character, he does just what is done, here, by people who are delicate; he gets it done by spirits whose quality fits them for that kind of work.

(13) If we have rightly understood what you have told us, the vital principle resides in the universal fluid; the spirit draws from this fluid the semi-material envelope that constitutes his perispirit, and it is by means of this envelope that he acts upon inert matter. Is this so?

“Yes; that is to say, he temporarily vitalizes matter with a kind of factitious life, causing it to live, for a time, as it does in an animal body. When a table moves under your hands, the matter of which it is composed lives, for the time being, as matter lives in a body of flesh; that is to say, it spontaneously obeys the intelligent being who employs it. Intelligent beings do not move matter, as a man moves an object exterior to himself; matter moves of itself; under the impulsion of the intelligent will with which it is associated. So, when the table moves, it is not the spirit who moves it with his arms; it is the temporarily vitalized matter of the table that spontaneously obeys the impulsion communicated to it by the spirit.”

(14) What part does the medium play in the production of this phenomenon?
“I have told you that the fluid of the medium is combined with the universal fluid accumulated by the spirit. The union of these two fluids, that is to say, of the *animalized fluid* with the *universal fluid*, is necessary to give life to the table. But you must remember that this factitious life is only momentary; it ceases with the cessation of the spirit-action which produced it, and often before the cessation of that action, if the supply of fluid becomes insufficient to maintain it.”
(15) Can a spirit act on matter without the joint action of a medium?
“A spirit can act without the medium being aware of it; many people serve as auxiliaries to spirits, in certain phenomena, without their suspecting it The spirit draws from them, as from a well, the animalized fluid that he requires;* and this is why the concurrence of a medium, as you understand it, is not always necessary, especially in the case of spontaneous phenomena.”
(16) Does the table act with knowledge of what it is about – does it think?
“It no more thinks than does the stick with which you make an intelligent sign; but the vitality with which it is momentarily endowed permits it to obey the impulsion of an intelligence. The table which moves does not turn into a spirit; it has not itself either thought or will.”
(17) What is the preponderating cause in the production of these phenomena; is it the spirit or the fluid?
“The spirit is the Cause, the fluid is the instrument; both are necessary.”
(18) What part does the will of the medium play in this case?
“That of calling the spirits, and seconding them in the impulsion given by them to the fluid.
“Is the action of the medium’s will always indispensable?
“It adds to the power of the spirits, but it is not always necessary, for a given movement may be made to take place, against, and in spite of; the medium’s will; which is a proof that there is a cause at work that is independent of the medium.” *Remark* – The contact of hands is not always necessary to make an object move.
Such contact is needed, in most cases, to give the first impulsion; but, when once the object is vitalized, it can obey the will without material contact; this depends either on the power of the medium or on the nature of the object. A first contact, even, is not always indispensable; we have proof of this in the spontaneous movements and displacements that occur without anyone having thought of obtaining them.
(19) How is it that everyone cannot produce the same effects, and why have not all mediums the same power?
“That depends on the Organization, and on the greater or less facility with which the combination of fluids can be effected; moreover, the spirit of the medium sympathizes sometimes more, sometimes less, with the disincarnate spirits, who do, or do not, find in him the necessary fluidic

power It is with this fluid as with that of magnetizers; it is more or less powerful. There are people whose animalized fluids are, in this respect, absolutely refractile; with others, the combination is only effected by an effort of their will; while there are others, again, with whom the combination takes place naturally, and so easily that they are not even aware of it, and who thus serve as mediums without knowing it, as we have already said." (See, farther on, the chapter on *Spontaneous Manifestations*)

Remark – Magnetism is undoubtedly the principle of spirit-phenomena, but not in the way generally supposed; for there are very powerful magnetizers who cannot move the smallest table, while there are people, and even children, who cannot magnetize, and who yet, by only placing their fingers upon a heavy table, can make it move and therefore, as psychic power is not always proportioned to the magnetic power, it is evident that some other condition is required for the production of the phenomena.

(20) Are people who are called "electrical" to be regarded as mediums?

"Those people draw to themselves the fluid necessary for the production of the phenomena, and are able to act without extraneous help. They are, therefore, not mediums, in the sense you attach to the word; but it is quite possible that a spirit may also assist them, and make use of their natural idiosyncrasy."

Remark – It would seem to be with people of this description as with sleepwalkers, who can act with or without the assistance of spirits. (See, in the chap. on *Mediums*, the article relating to *Somnanbulic Mediums*)

(21) Is the spirit who acts on solid bodies, when he moves them, inside or outside their substance?

"He may be in or out of it; we have told you that matter is no obstacle to spirits; they penetrate everything; a portion of their perispirit identifies itself; so to say, with the object it penetrates."

(22) How does a spirit manage to rap and does he make use of a material object?

"No more than he makes use of his arms to move a table. You are well aware that he has no hammer at his disposal. His tool is the combined fluid put in action by his will, whether he moves an object, or whether he raps upon it. When he moves a body, the light shows you the movements; when he raps, the air conveys to you the sound."

(23) We can understand that it may be so, when he raps on a hard body; but how does he cause us to hear raps, or even articulate sounds, in the air?

"Since he can act on matter, he can act upon the air as well as upon a table. As to articulate sounds, he can imitate them like other sounds."

(24) You tell us that a spirit does not make use of his hands in moving a table; nevertheless, in certain visual manifestations, we have seen hands appear, the fingers of which ran over the keyboard of a musical instrument, struck the keys, and produced audible sounds. Was there not, in such cases, every appearance of the movement of the keys being produced by the pressure of the fingers? – Is not this pressure as direct and as real as when

we feel these fingers upon ourselves, and when these hands actually leave their impression on our skin?

“You cannot comprehend the nature of spirits, and their manner of acting, except by comparisons which give you but an incomplete idea of them; and you are wrong to be always wanting to assimilate their ways of proceeding with yours. Spirits can only work in the way that is in keeping with their organization. Have we not told you that the fluid of the perispirit penetrates matter and identifies itself with the matter it penetrates, vitalizing it, for the time being, with a factitious life? When the spirit places his fingers on the keys, he really places them there, and what is more, he moves them; but it is by no muscular force that he presses on the key; he vitalizes the key, as he vitalizes the table, and the key obeys his will, *moves itself*, and strikes the string. And there is, yet further, in some cases of this kind, something to be remarked which you will find it difficult to understand, *viz.*, that there are spirits so little advanced, and so material, as compared with elevated spirits, that they still retain the illusions of terrestrial life, and imagine themselves to be acting as they did when in the body. They no more understand the real cause of the effects which they themselves produce, than the peasant understands the laws of acoustics by which he articulates. If you ask such spirits how they play on the piano, they will tell you that they strike it with their fingers, because they suppose themselves to do so; the effect is produced by them instinctively, without their knowing how, and yet it is really produced by an action of their will. When they cause you to hear words pronounced, they do it in the same way.”

Remark – From these explanations it appears that spirits can produce all the effects that we ourselves can produce, but that they do so by the use of means appropriate to their organization. Certain forces, peculiar to themselves, replace the muscles that are necessary to us in our manipulations just as with the dumb man, a gesture replaces the words he is unable to articulate.

(25) Among the phenomena adduced as proofs of occult power, there are some which are evidently Contrary to all the known laws of nature; does not doubt appear to be reasonable in regard to such?

“Man is far from knowing all the laws of nature; if he knew them all, he would be superior to humanity. Every day disproves the pretensions of those who, believing they know everything, would assign limits to nature; and yet they remain as much puffed up as ever. By incessantly unveiling new mysteries, God warns man to distrust his own acquirements; for a day will come when *the science of the most learned will be confounded*. Have you not constantly before your eyes examples of bodies propelled by an impulsion capable of counteracting the force of gravity? – Does not a bullet, fired into the air, momentarily surmount that force? Poor human beings, who think yourselves so very wise, but whose absurd vanity is upset every instant, try to understand that you are, as yet, but very ignorant little creatures!”

75. These explanations are clear, categorical, and unambiguous; and from them we derive this very important information, *viz.*, that the universal fluid, in which resides the principle of life, is the chief agent of spirit-manifestation, and that this agent receives its impulse from the spirit, whether the latter is incarnated or errant. This fluid, condensed, constitutes the perispirit, or, in other words, *the semi-material envelope of the spirit*. In the state of incarnation, the perispirit is united to the matter of the body; in the erratic state, it is free. When the spirit is incarnated the substance of the perispirit is more or less bound, more or less adherent, if we may be allowed the expression. With certain people, a sort of emanation of this fluid takes place, as the result of their Organization; and it is this fact, strictly speaking which explains the peculiar qualities of physical mediums. The emission of this animalized fluid may be more or less abundant, its combination more or less easy; and mediums will accordingly be more or less powerful There is nothing to guarantee the permanence of psychic ability and the occasional loss of power by mediums is thus explained.

76. Let us here call in the aid of a comparison. When we desire to act physically upon a given point at a distance, it is our thought which determines the action; but thought cannot of itself strike the blow: it must have an intermediary which it directs, such as a stick, a projectile, a current of air, etc. Observe, too, that thought does not act directly upon the stick, for if the stick is not touched, it will not act. The source of thought, which is nothing else than the spirit incarnated within us, is united to the body by the perispirit; but the thought can no more act upon the body without the perispirit, than it can act upon the stick without the body. Thought acts upon the perispirit, because the perispirit is the substance with which it has most affinity; the perispirit acts upon the muscles, the muscles seize the stick, and the stick strikes the mark. When the spirit is not incarnated, he requires *an extraneous auxiliary*; this auxiliary is the vital fluid, by the aid of which he renders the object apt to obey the impulsion of his will.

77. When an object is set in motion, carried away, or raised into the air, the spirit does not seize it, push it, or lift it, as we do with our hands; the spirit, so to say, *saturates* it with *his own* fluid combined with that of the medium, and the object, being thus vivified for the moment, acts as a living being would act, with this difference, that, not having a will of its own, it follows the impulsion communicated to it by the will of the spirit.

As the vital fluid, under the action of the spirit, gives an artificial and momentary life to inert bodies, and as the perispirit is nothing else than this same vital fluid, it follows that, when the spirit is incarnated, it is the spirit that gives life to the body by means of the perispirit; and the perispirit remains united to the body, as long as the organization of the latter permits; when separated from it, the body dies. If; therefore, instead of fashioning wood into a table, we should hew it into a statue, and if we then acted upon this statue as upon a table, we should have a statue moving, rapping, and responding to our action by movements and raps – we should, in short, have

a statue vitalized *for the moment* with artificial life, and those who have so perseveringly sharpened their wits upon *talking-tables* might sharpen them upon *talking-statues*. But what a flood of light does this theory shed on a host of phenomena hitherto unexplained! Of how many allegories, how many mysterious legends, does it give us a rational explanation!

78. The skeptics go so far as to assert that the raising of a table, without a prop, is impossible, because it would be contrary to the law of gravitation. To this assertion we reply, first, that negation disproves nothing; next, that, the occurrence of a fact, if contrary to all *known* laws, would only prove that it occurs in virtue of some law as yet *unknown* to us. We shall give, further on, an explanation of this law; but our explanation will not be accepted by our adversaries, precisely because it is given by spirits who have left their terrestrial garments, instead of being given by spirits who wear frock-coats and sit in learned assemblies. If the spirit of Arago, in the flesh, had laid down this law, those objectors would have accepted it blindfold; but, being given by Arago after his decease, they reject it as fanciful, because according to them, Arago being dead, all is over with him. We will not pretend to alter their opinion; but as this objection might prove a stumbling block to some minds, we will try to answer it from the objector's own standpoint, that is to say, leaving aside, for the moment, the theory of artificial vitalization.

79. When a vacuum is produced under the receiver of an air pump, it is held down so forcibly that it is impossible to raise it, owing to the weight of the superincumbent column of air. Let the air into the receiver, and it is raised with the greatest ease, because the air beneath it acts as a counterpoise to the air above it. If the air beneath the receiver be now compressed, it will acquire a density greater than that of the air above, and the receiver will be raised, in spite of gravitation; and, if the current of air be rapid and violent, it will be sustained in space without any *visible* support, in the same way as are the little figures of pith that are made to dance on a jet of water.

Why then should not the universal fluid, which is the *constituent element of all matter*, when accumulated around a table, have the property of diminishing or of augmenting its natural weight, just as air affects the receiver of the air-pump, and as hydrogen affects balloons, without any derogation from the law of gravitation? Are you aware of all the properties of all the forces of this fluid? No; then do not deny a fact because you are as yet unable to explain it.

80. Let us return to the theory of the movement of a table. If a spirit can raise a table by the means indicated, he can raise anything else: an armchair, for example. If he can raise an armchair, he can also, sufficient force being granted, raise it with someone sitting in it. We have thus the explanation of a phenomenon which has taken place hundreds of times, through Mr. Home and through other people; and, in order to prove that the spectators of these levitations were not the victims of an optical illusion,

they have often made a mark on the ceiling with a pencil, and people have passed under them, while they were thus held up in the air.

81. We alluded, just now, to the possible augmentation of the weight of bodies; a phenomenon which sometimes occurs, and which is no more anomalous than the resistance of the receiver under the pressure of the atmospheric column. Under the influence of certain mediums, we ‘have seen objects, light in themselves, offer the same sort of resistance, and, immediately afterwards, yield to the slightest effort. In the experiment mentioned above, the receiver does not really weigh more or less, but it *appears* heavier or lighter, through the action of the exterior agent to which it is submitted; it is probably the same with the table, which has always the same intrinsic weight (for its mass has not increased), but an extraneous agent opposes its movement, and this agent may very well be the surrounding fluids by which it is penetrated, just as the air is the agent which augments or diminishes the apparent weight of the receiver. Try the experiment of the air-pump in the presence of an ignorant peasant, who does not understand that it is the air (invisible, and therefore incomprehensible by him), which acts, and you would have little difficulty in persuading him that the devil has something to do with it.

It may, perhaps, be said that, the vital fluid being imponderable, its accumulation cannot augment the weight of an object agreed; but let it be understood that, in using the word *accumulation*, we did so by way of comparison, and not as implying similarity between that fluid and air. You say it is imponderable. Be it so; nevertheless, nothing proves this to be the case; its essential nature is unknown to us, and we are far from being cognizant of all its properties. Before experiment had proved the weight of the air, we had no suspicion of the effects of that weight.

Electricity is also ranged among the imponderable fluids; nevertheless, a body may be kept down by an electric current, so as to offer very great resistance to anyone who would raise it, and will thus *appear* to have become heavier. Because, in the phenomenon referred to, we cannot see any means of support, it would be very illogical to assert that no support exists; for a spirit may make use of levers unknown to us. Nature shows us, daily, that her power goes beyond the testimony of our senses.

We can only explain, as the result of a similar action, another singular phenomenon often witnessed by us, *viz.*, that of a young and delicate woman lifting, with a couple of fingers, as easily as she would a feather, a robust, heavy man, together with the chair on which he sits.

The intermittent action of this power, moreover, affords additional proof of its being due to a cause independent of the person by whom it is manifested.

---

* Louis IX. King of France, surnamed “The Saint”, the self-announced Spirit-Guardian of the Kardec Society of Paris. This is not the first time that manifestations have been alleged to be made by him. Much was written and said, as far back as the year 1820, concerning the vision of the Duchess de

Berri, which occurred soon after the murder of her husband, and shortly *before* the birth of her son, the present Count de Chambord. Although the child was not yet born, he seemed in the vision to be standing before his mother, with Saint Louis at his side. The Duchess, in her vision, put a crown on the child's head; but Saint Louis took it off. Saint Louis, presently afterwards, put on the child's head *another* crown; probably, then, *not* one of Divine Right." But when, and where, will that second crown be worn?

The Duchess, after this vision, said she was sure her child would be a son, which her father-in-law said was "presumptuous" to which she replied: "Ah! Papa, Saint Louis knows better than you do!" Miss Wynn, daughter of Sir Watkyn Williams Wynn, in her *Diary of a Lady of Quality*, gives a letter on this subject from the Pope's Nuncio.

Louis IX. Of France, who died in the year 1270, was placed in the rank of Saints by the Church, although he had not hesitated to resist the Pope in the cause of justice. He was greatly beloved by the people, whom he protected from the oppression of the nobles. He also upheld the liberties of the towns, telling his son "The more free you make *them*, the more your enemies will fear *you*." TR.

* This statement, made so many years before the generalization of the advanced phenomena to which it furnishes the key, also explains the exhaustion frequently experienced by the medium and by the more sensitive members of the circle in whose presence the production of spirit-forms occurs; the spirits who thus manifest themselves drawing from them, "as from a well," the animalized fluid which they have sometimes been seen *putting back*, at the close of the *séance*, into the brain and spinal mechanism from which they had drawn it. The subtle substance in question, when thus seen, presents the appearance of a sort of vapor. – TR.

CHAPTER 5

Spontaneous Physical Manifestations

Noises, racket, and disturbances – Things thrown about – Objects introduced spontaneously into rooms – Statements by a spirit in regard to these phenomena.

82. The phenomena of which we are now about to treat are, for the most part, elicited; but it sometimes happens that they occur spontaneously, without any participation of the medium's will, and even in opposition to it, becoming, in some cases, very troublesome. And, as though to prove still more conclusively that they are not the figment of imaginations over-excited by spiritist ideas, they often occur with people who have never heard of spiritism, and just when they are least expected.

Phenomena of this spontaneous character, which we may call *the practical spiritism of nature*, are very important, because they exclude all suspicion of connivance; for which reason, we would invite those who are interested in spiritism to collect all the facts of this description which come to their knowledge, and, above all, to ascertain their reality by a minute study of the Circumstances under which they may have occurred, in order to assure themselves that they are not the victims of trickery or illusion.

83. Of all spirit-manifestations, the simplest and most frequent are those which are made audibly, by raps, or by other noises; and here it is that illusion is most to be feared, for a vast number of natural causes may produce such sounds: the action of the wind, an object that we may move ourselves without perceiving it, an animal not seen by us, an insect, etc.; not to mention silly tricks played off by foolish people. Spirit-sounds, however, are usually of a peculiar character; they have an intensity and a character of their own, which, notwithstanding their great variety, can hardly be mistaken, so that they are not easily confounded with common noises, such as the creaking of wood, the crackling of a fire, or the ticking of a clock; spiritraps are clear and sharp, sometimes soft and light, sometimes loud and distinct, sometimes even noisy; changing their place, and recurring, without any mechanical regularity. The best means of ascertaining the nature of any unusual sounds, so as to leave no doubt about their origin, is to satisfy oneself as to their obedience to the will. If the raps make themselves heard in the place we designate, if they answer to our thought by their number or character, we cannot doubt that an intelligence is at work; although it must be remarked that failure to obey our will is not always a proof of the absence of such an intelligence.

84. Let us suppose that, through careful observation, we have arrived at a certainty that unusual sounds, or other manifestations, are the work of unseen intelligences; is it reasonable to be afraid of them? Assuredly not, for in no such case is there the least danger; only those who are persuaded that the devil has a hand in the matter can be alarmed by them like children

who are frightened by stories of “Rawhead and Bloody-bones.” But it must be admitted that these manifestations do sometimes assume uncomfortable proportions, and show a persistence which makes people naturally desire to be rid of them; and therefore a few words on this subject will not be out of place here.

85. We have said that physical manifestations have for their object the desire of spirits to attract our attention by some special act, and thus to convince us of the presence of a power distinct from that of man. We have also said that spirits of high degree do not make these signs themselves but employ inferior spirits to do it for them, as we employ servants to do rough work for us; and they do this for a purpose which we are about to explain. This purpose once attained, the physical manifestation ceases, because it is no longer needed. One or two examples will give a better idea of our meaning.

86. Several years ago, when we first began the study of spiritism, and while occupied in writing a work in regard to it, we heard knockings around us for four hours consecutively; it was the first time that anything of the sort had occurred to us, and we had abundant proof that they were not produced by accident; but, for the moment, we could not ascertain anything more about them. At that period, we frequently saw an excellent writing medium; and, next morning, we questioned the spirit who communicated through that medium as to the cause of the knockings we had heard. “It is,” he replied, “your familiar spirit who desires to speak to you.” What does he wish to say to us? “You can ask him yourself, for he is here.” Having addressed the same question to this spirit, he announced himself to us under an allegorical name (we learned afterwards, from other spirits, that he belongs to a very elevated order, and played a very important part when on earth), pointed out to us certain errors in our work, indicating the lines in which they occurred, gave us wise and useful counsel, and added that he would be always with us, and would come at our call, whenever we might desire to interrogate him. From that time, the spirit alluded to has never left us. He has given us innumerable proofs of his great superiority and his kindly and efficacious intervention has been plainly shown in our worldly affairs, as well as in our investigation of metaphysical questions. But, after our first meeting, the knockings were never renewed. Why was this? Evidently, because he had wished to enter into regular communication with us, and in order to do this, it was necessary to apprize us of the fact. The signal once made and explained, and regular relations established between us, the raps ceased to be useful, and therefore were not again produced. When soldiers are already on parade, the drum is no longer beaten to awaken them.

A fact of a similar character occurred in the experience of a friend of ours. For some time his bedroom had resounded with different noises, which at length became very annoying. Having had an opportunity of conferring with the spirit of his father, through a writing medium, he learned that the noises had been made by him, ascertained his wishes, did what he was thus

requested to do, and was never again disturbed. It may here be remarked that those who have the means of communicating regularly and easily with spirits are much more rarely subject to manifestations of this kind than those who have not the means of doing so; a fact which explains itself.

87. Spontaneous manifestations are not always confined to noises and rapping; they sometimes degenerate into downright racketing and disturbance, furniture and other objects are upset, projectiles of all descriptions are hurled from without, windows are opened and shut by invisible hands, panes of glass are broken; annoyances which can hardly be set down as illusions.

The confusion thus produced among material objects is often very real; but sometimes there is only the appearance of reality. We hear? a rattling in an adjoining room; pots and pans appear to be falling about, and breaking with a crash; logs of wood seem to be rolling about the floor; we hasten to see what is the matter, but find everything in order; and we have hardly left the room, before the tumult begins again.

88. Manifestations of this description are neither rare nor novel; there are few places without some stories of the kind. Fear has doubtless frequently exaggerated facts, which have thus been made to assume gigantic and ridiculous proportions, through passing from mouth to mouth superstition aiding, the houses where such disturbances have occurred have come to be reputed as haunted, and hence have arisen many wondrous and frightful legends of beasts and devils. Knavery, on the other hand, has not failed to make use of the opportunity of trading on credulity afforded by these stories. It is, moreover, easy to imagine the impression which events of the nature referred to, even when shorn of exaggerations, may produce on weak minds, predisposed by education to superstitious ideas. The surest method of avoiding any such disagreeable impressions (since there is no preventing the occurrence of the facts which give rise to them,) is to learn the truth about them. The simplest things may become appalling when their cause is not understood. When the world becomes familiarized with spirits, and when those who are subject to their manifestations no longer fancy that they have a legion of devils at their heels, the prevalent fear of spirits will vanish.

Many authentic facts of the above nature are recorded in the *Revue Spirite*; among others, the history of the *Rapping Spirit of Bergzabern*, whose unpleasant tricks continued more than eight years (Nos. of May, June, and July 1858); that of Dibbelsdorf (August 1858); that of the *Baker of Grandes Ventes*, near Dieppe (March 1860); that of the disturbances which occurred in the rue des Noyers, in Paris (August 1860); that of the *Spirit of Castelnaudary* (February 1860); that of the *Manufactory in Saint Petersburg* (April 1860), and many others.

89. Facts of this nature have often the character of unmistakable persecution.

We knew of six sisters who lived together, and who, for several years, had their dresses scattered about, every morning, sometimes hidden under the roof of the house, sometimes torn, or cut into shreds, notwithstanding all the precautions they took in keeping them under lock and key. People in bed, and wide awake, have seen their curtains shaken, or have had their bedclothes or their pillows violently snatched away from them have been lifted up from their mattresses, or even been thrown out of bed.

These facts are more frequent than is imagined; but the vast majority of the victims dare not talk of them, for fear of ridicule. And, to our certain knowledge, the treatment to which some people have been subjected, with a view to curing them of what has been thought to be a tendency to hallucinations, has sometimes produced madness. Physicians cannot comprehend these things, because they admit only material causes, and thus make some most terrible mistakes. History will, one day, recount some of the medical treatments of this nineteenth century, as nowadays we tell of the horrors of the middle Ages.

We fully admit that certain occurrences have been the result of trickery or of malice; but if, when all the evidence has been examined, it is proved that some of these things are not the work of men, we must necessarily come to the conclusion that they are the work of unseen intelligences some will say of “the devil!” we say, of spirits; but the question next arises, of what sort of spirits?

90. Superior spirits do not, anymore than grave and serious men, amuse themselves with playing ill-natured tricks. We have often made spirits of this disorderly nature come to us, and have questioned them as to the motives of their misbehavior. The majority of them seem to have no other object than that of amusing themselves, and to be rather reckless than wicked; they laugh at the alarm they occasion, and at the useless searching’s that are made to find out the cause of the tumult.

There are others, however, who will furiously assail someone whom it gratifies them to persecute, and will follow him from one house to another. Others, again, attach themselves to some particular locality, from no graver motive than caprice. Sometimes it is a vengeance which they exercise, as we shall show farther on. In other cases, their object is more praiseworthy they wish to attract our attention, and to enter into communication with us, either for the purpose of giving advice which may be useful to us, or to ask something for themselves. We have often known them ask for our prayers; others have begged that some vow, which they were not able to fulfill during their earthly life, might be fulfilled in their name; others, again, have desired to make reparation for some evil deed committed by them when on earth, and this, for the sake of their own repose in their present state. Generally speaking, it is a mistake to be afraid of them; their presence may be troublesome, but is rarely dangerous.

It is not strange, however, that people are anxious to rid themselves of such visitants but, unfortunately, they generally set about doing this in a wrong

way. If spirits are only amusing themselves, the greater the gravity with which their antics are met, the more persistent they become; like mischievous children, who only tease the more, the more anger they excite, and the more successful they are in frightening the timid. The wisest course is to laugh at their absurdities for they then get tired of playing the fool, and cease their efforts to annoy. We have an acquaintance who, far from being irritated by these attacks, excited them, defying their authors to do this or that, with such good effect, that, after a few (lays, they took themselves off. But, as we have said, there are some whose motives are less frivolous; and for this reason it is always well to learn what they are aiming at. If they make some request, we may be sure they will cease their visits as soon as their wish is satisfied. The best way of gaining information in this respect is to evoke the spirit, through the intervention of a good medium, in order to ascertain with whom, and what, we have to do. Should it be a spirit who is unhappy, charity commands us to treat hint with the consideration due to his suffering; if he be a practical joker, we may treat him more cavalierly if he be malicious, we must try to aid him in becoming better. In any case, prayer can only have a good effect, but the gravity of any formal exorcism only excites their merriment, and they treat it as of no account.

If we are able to enter into communication with them, we must attach no importance to any titles they may assume, whether of a burlesque character, or assumed with a view of horrifying; for this is often done to divert themselves with our credulity.

We shall recur to this subject, giving further details, and stating the reasons which often render prayer for spirits inefficacious, in the chapters on *Haunted places* and *Obsession*.

91. The phenomena we are considering, although produced by spirits of an inferior order, are often superintended by spirits of higher degree, with the view of convincing us of the existence of incorporeal beings in close connection with mankind. The sounds they make, the very fears excited by them, arrest attention, and end by opening the eyes of the skeptic. The question as to the nature of the mysterious beings, who take these means of manifesting their presence and their power, is answered by the means which they themselves point out of communicating with them. The explanations which they give us, in regard to themselves and their procedures, teach us also to distinguish between what is real and what is false or exaggerated in statements of these phenomena; a discrimination hardly to be arrived at of ourselves. Whenever anything unusual occurs in our presence, such as an unaccustomed noise, a movement, or even an apparition, our first care should be to ascertain whether it may not be due to some natural cause, because this is most probable; and we must be careful not to admit the intervention of spirits, unless we are sure that the phenomenon is of their producing. In this way we exclude the possibility of illusion. If, for example, at a time when we are sure that no creature in the

flesh is near us, we get a box on the ear, or a slap on the back, we can be in no doubt as to whether an invisible being is, or is not, in our vicinity.
We should be very careful in regard, not only to tales which may be more or less exaggerated, but also to our own impressions, and not b in haste to attribute an occult origin to all that is beyond our comprehension. An immense number of very simple natural causes may produce effects that appear strange at first sight; and it would be mere superstition to lay to the account of spirits all the accidents that may happen in the house, or in daily life, and which are usually the result of our awkwardness or want of care.
92. The explanation given respecting the movement of inert bodies is equally applicable to all the spontaneous phenomena that may occur. The noises referred to, though louder than the rapping on tables, have the same origin; the throwing or displacement of objects is affected by the same force that raises a table. It may be asked here:
“Where is the medium in the cases just referred to?” – Spirits have told us that, even in these cases, there is always someone whom the unseen agent makes use of, with, or without, his knowledge. Spontaneous manifestations very rarely occur in isolated places; it is almost always in inhabited houses that such things take place, and through the unconscious mediumship of someone present, whose influence aids their production, without his desiring to do so. Such people are unmistakably *mediums*, although themselves unaware of their power, and may therefore be called *natural mediums*. They are, in comparison with other mediums, what *natural sleepwalkers* are to *magnetic sleepwalkers*, and offer quite as curious a subject of study.
93. The voluntary or involuntary intervention of a person endowed with a special aptitude for the production of these phenomena appears to be necessary in the greater number of cases, although cases occur in which the spirit appears to act alone; but even then, it is quite possible that he may draw the animalized fluid from some other source than the people present: a possibility which explains why It IS that spirits, though incessantly around us, do not always exert a perturbing action. To do this, it is necessary, first, that the spirit should will it, and, secondly, that he should have some motive for doing it; otherwise, he does nothing. It is also necessary for him to find, precisely in the place where he wishes to act, the person or people fitted to second his action; a coincidence of comparatively rare occurrence. If an available person enters unexpectedly, the spirit may profit by the opportunity thus afforded; or, in spite of the concurrence of favorable circumstances, he may be prevented from acting by some superior will, which does not permit him to act as he wishes. He may be only permitted to act under certain limitations, and in a case in which the manifestations he wishes to produce would be useful, either as a means of conviction, or as a test for the person who is the object of them.

94. We will only quote, in illustration of the foregoing remarks, a conversation in reference to the occurrences in the rue des Noyers, in Paris, in June 1860. (See the *Revue Spirite*, for August 1860)

(1) (Question addressed to Saint Louis) Will you have the kindness to tell us if the facts reported to have taken place in the rue des Noyers really took place? We have no doubt as to their possibility.

"Yes, they really occurred; the popular imagination exaggerates them, but they were really the work of a spirit who likes to amuse himself at the expense of the inhabitants of the house in question."

(2) Is there anyone in the house who is the cause of these manifestations?

"Such manifestations are always caused by the presence of the person attacked; they arise from the ill-will of the perturbing spirit towards an inhabitant of the place to which he comes; and his object is to annoy him, and to drive him out of the house."

(3) We would ask if, among the people of the house, there is someone who causes these phenomena by a spontaneous, involuntary, psychic influence?

"Without such an influence, these occurrences could not have taken place. A spirit dwells in a place for which lie has a predilection; lie remains passive, as long as there is in it no one fitted to be used as a medium; but if such a person comes thither, he uses his mediumship as much as he can."

(4) Is the presence of such a person at the very place itself indispensable?

"It is so usually, and such is the case in the present instance; this is why I said that, without the presence of such a person, the occurrences could not have taken place.

But it was not lily object to generalize; there are cases in which the immediate presence of a medium is not necessary."

(5) Uproarious spirits being always of an inferior order; is the aptitude for serving as their auxiliary a presumption of inferiority on the part of the person they use as a medium, and does it show his sympathy with the beings who use him?

"No; not precisely so; for this aptitude results from a physical disposition nevertheless, it sometimes implies, on the part of the medium, a physical tendency from which he should endeavor to free himself. The more elevated you are morally, the higher are the spirits you attract; and these necessarily keep off the lower ones."

(6) Where does the spirit find the projectiles he makes use of?

"The different objects thus employed are generally taken from the spot where the manifestations occur, or in its neighborhood; a force proceeding from the spirit impels them into the air, and they fall into the place designed by him."

(7) Since these spontaneous manifestations are often permitted, and even ordered, with a view to convincing the skeptic, it appears to us that, if the latter were themselves the objects of these phenomena, they would be compelled to yield to the evidence of their own perceptions. They sometimes complain that they cannot get hold of conclusive facts is it not in

the power of spirits to give such people some proof that they could not deny?
“Do not atheists and materialists witness, every moment, the effects of the power of God and of thought? But does this hinder them from denying both God and the soul? Did the miracles of Jesus convert all his contemporaries? Do not those who, in your time, ask you to let them see some manifestations, too often resemble the
Pharisees who said ‘Master, show us a sign’? Those who are not convinced, by the wonders of the creation, of the existence of beings superior to man, would hardly be induced to admit the existence of spirits, even if the latter should appear to them in ways the most convincing. Opportunities of seeing are always to be found by those who seek for them with honesty and sincerity.
Incredulity cannot hinder the accomplishment of the providential purposes; it will not hinder the development of the spiritist movement. Do not trouble yourself about opposition, which is, to the truth, what shadow is to the picture, giving it a higher relief.”
(8) Do you think it would be of any use to evoke this spirit, so that we might ask him some questions?
“Evoke him if you will; but he is a spirit of low degree, who will not be able to give you much information.”
95. (Communication with the disturbing spirit of the rue des Noyers)
(1) (Evocation)
“Why do you call me? Do you want to have some stones thrown at you? In that case, we should soon see you scampering away, though you look so brave!”
(2) We should not be frightened even though you threw stones at us; we ask you to tell us if it is really in your power to do so?
“Perhaps I could not, here; you have a guardian who looks so sharply after you.”
(3) Was there anyone in the rue des Noyers who helped you in playing off your tricks on the inmates of that house?
“Certainly, I had a capital instrument, and no wise and priggish spirit to hinder me; for I am merry and like to amuse myself sometimes.”
(4) Who was the person that served as your instrument?
“A maidservant.”
(5) Was she your auxiliary unawares?
“Oh yes; poor girl she was the most frightened of them all.”
(6) Did you do this from ill will?
“I? I had no ill-will whatever; but you men, who get hold of everything, will turn this to your advantage.”
(7) What do you mean? We do not understand you.
“What I wanted was to amuse myself; but you spiritists will study the thing, and you will have one more fact to prove that we exist.”

(8) You say you had no ill will; but you broke all the windows of the apartment; and that was a real injury of your doing!
“That’s a mere trifle.”
(9) Where did you get the things you threw into the house?
“They are common enough; I found them in the yard, and in the neighboring gardens.”
(10) Did you find them *all*, or did you fabricate some of them? (See Chap. VIII)
“I created nothing, composed nothing.”
(11) If you had not found them, could you have made them?
“That would have been more difficult; but we can mix things together, and so make a sort of a whole.”
(12) Now tell us how you threw them?
“Ah! That is more difficult to tell. I helped myself by the electric nature of the girl, joined to my own, which is less material; we were able thus to transport these objects between us.”
(13) You would not object, I think, to give us some information about yourself.
Tell us, first of all, if you have been long dead?
“A long time; full fifty years.”
(14) What (lid you do when living?
“Not much good; I did rough work, such as picking up rags, etc., in this quarter; and people used to tease me, because I was too fond of Goodman Noah’s red liquor. So I wanted to make them all decamp from the house.”
(15) Is it of yourself, and of your own free will, that you have answered our questions?
“I had an instructor.”
(16) Who?
“Your good King Louis.”
Remark – This question was suggested by the nature of some of the above answers, which appeared to be beyond the attainment of this spirit, both in point of ideas, and of expression. There is nothing surprising in his having been aided by more enlightened spirit, wishing to take advantage of this occasion, in order to give us information; on the contrary, cases of the kind are very common. But there was a remarkable peculiarity in the present instance, the influence of another spirit being made apparent in the very writing of the answers in which he intervened, and which was more even and flowing than the rough and irregular writing of the rag-picker, which was indistinct, and of a different character.
(17) What are you doing now? Do you ever think of your future?
“Not yet; I am a wanderer. People think so little of me upon the earth; nobody prays for me. I am not helped, and therefore I do not exert myself.”
Remark – We shall see, farther on, how much we may contribute to the comfort and advancement of inferior spirits, by prayer and counsel.
(18) What was your name when living?

“Jeannet.”
(19) Well, Jeannet, we will pray for you. Tell us if our evocation has given you pleasure, or whether it has annoyed you?
“Pleasure, rather; for you are kind, good folks, though somewhat too grave. You have listened to me, and I am pleased with that.”

JEANNET

Objects brought by Spirits

96. The only difference between this class of phenomena and those just alluded to consists in the nature of the objects brought (which are almost always pleasing), the good intentions of the spirit who brings them, and the gentle and often delicate manner in which they are presented. We allude to the spontaneous exhibition of things which were not in the room when we entered it; these spirit-gifts being generally flowers, sometimes fruit, sugar plums, jewels, etc.
97. It is, however, to be observed that phenomena of this character are more easily imitated than most others; for which reason we must always be on our guard against trickery. We know what conjurors can do in this line and dupes may easily be made by skilful and interested maneuvers, even without the conjuror’s skill. The best of all guarantees against frauds of the description alluded to are, first, the honorability and disinterestedness of the medium; secondly, the attentive examination of all the circumstances under which such reputed phenomena occur; and, thirdly, a wide and enlightened experience of spiritism, which alone enables us to form a correct judgment in regard to Occurrences that may appear suspicious.
98. The theory of physical manifestations in general is summed up remarkably well in the following dissertation of a spirit whose communications bare an evident stamp of logical superiority. Much more from the same spirit will be found in the course of this work. He has made himself known to us, under the name of *Erastes*, as a disciple of Saint Paul, and as the Spirit-guide of the medium who serves as his interpreter
“It is absolutely necessary, in order to obtain phenomena of this description, to have with you mediums whom I will call Sensitives, that is to say, people gifted, in the highest degree, with psychic abilities of expansion and penetrability; because, the nervous system of such mediums being easily excited, they are able, by means of certain vibrations, to project their animalized fluid around them in profusion.
“Impressionable natures, those whose nerves vibrate at the faintest emotion or sensation, responding at once to any moral or physical influence, internal or external, furnish excellent mediums for the physical phenomena of tangibility, and for the transport of objects. The peculiarity of their nervous system, which is almost entirely deprived of the refractile envelope that isolates the nervous system in the greater number of incarnated spirits, renders them especially apt for the development of these phenomena. Consequently, with a medium of this nature, whose other gifts are not

antagonistic to development, phenomena of tangibility, raps in walls or furniture, *intelligent* movements, and even the floating of the heaviest bodies in the air, are easily obtained. And these results will occur with still greater certainty if, instead of a single medium, there are present several mediums equally endowed.

“But, between the production of these phenomena and the obtaining of the introduction of objects into closed rooms, there is an immense step to be accomplished; for, in the latter case, not only is the work of the spirit more complex and more difficult, but, what is still more important, the spirit can only operate by means of a single psychic mechanism; in other words, in this case, several mediums cannot be made to cooperate simultaneously for the production of the same phenomenon. On the contrary, it often happens that the presence of people antipathetic to the operating spirit renders the operation impossible. Moreover, this sort of mediumship always necessitates a greater power of concentration, and, at the same time, a full diffusion of certain fluids; and these fluids can only be obtained through mediums endowed with the highest psychic gifts; those, in a word, whose electro-mediumistic machinery is of the best quality.

“In general, the phenomenon of the transport of objects into closed rooms is, and will remain, exceptionally rare. There is no need for me to point out why phenomena of this character should be less common than the other facts of tangibility; from what I have said, you can draw your own conclusions. On the other hand, these phenomena are of such a nature that, not only are all mediums not fitted for their production, but all spirits themselves cannot produce them. In fact, it is necessary that, between the spirit and the medium whom he influences, there should exist an affinity, an analogy, in a word, a certain homogeneity, which allows the expansible quality of the spiritic fluid of the incarnated agent to blend, unite, and combine with that of the spirit who desires to bring you something. This fusion must be such that the resulting force becomes, so to speak, *one*; as, when the electric current acts on charcoal, fire and light are produced as though the current and the charcoal were one. Why this union? Why this fusion you will ask? It is because, for the production of these phenomena, it is necessary that the essential qualities of the spirit-motor should be increased by certain qualities of the medium because the *vital fluid*, indispensable for the production of all psychic phenomena, is the exclusive property of the incarnated spirit, and consequently, the operating spirit is obliged to impregnate himself with it. It is only then that he can, by means of certain properties of your surrounding atmosphere which are unknown to you, isolate certain material objects, and thus render them invisible, move certain objects, and even move people in the flesh as well.

“It is not permitted, at this time, to unveil to you the laws that regulate the gases and the fluids by which control your environment but before many years have passed, before the space of a human life is accomplished, the explanation of these laws and of these phenomena will be obtained by you;

and you will witness the rise of a new variety of mediums, who will fall into a peculiar cataleptic state as soon as they are in trance.

“You have seen with what great difficulties the bringing of objects into closed rooms is surrounded. You may reasonably conclude, therefore, that phenomena of this nature are, as I have said, very rare, and the more so, because the spirits themselves are but little inclined to their production, since it necessitates on their part a kind of labor which, from being almost *physical* in its nature, is really disagreeable and fatiguing for them. There is yet another obstacle to the generalization of facts of the character in question, *viz.*, the state of the medium himself, which often opposes an insuperable barrier to their production, notwithstanding the energy and goodwill of the spirit operators.

“Raps, movements, and suspensions, are simple phenomena, produced by the concentration and dilatation of certain fluids, and can be obtained by the will and effort of mediums fitted for the work, provided they are seconded by the necessary concourse of special circumstances, only to be brought about by a single spirit and a single medium, and demanding, beyond the conditions of tangibility, a fluid combination of a peculiar nature, in order to isolate and render invisible the objects which are to be brought to the circle.

“You, spiritists, who have already studied the subject, will easily understand these explanations, and what I have said about the concentration of special fluids required for producing the transport and tactility of inert matter; you are able to admit it, just as you admit the phenomena of electricity and magnetism, with which the facts of mediumship are in close analogy, and of which, they are, so to say, the confirmation and development. As for the skeptic, and those who oppose the light in the name of science, I am not anxious to convince them they will be convinced in time, by the force of evidence, and will have to admit the facts of spirit-manifestation, as they have had to admit so many other facts which human science formerly denied.

“To recapitulate the facts of tangibility are of frequent occurrence, but the bringing of objects to a circle is very rare, because the conditions for obtaining this order of phenomena are very difficult to combine; consequently, no medium can say:

‘At such an hour and moment I shall get something brought,’ for the spirit himself often meets with an insuperable obstacle to his efforts. I should add that these phenomena are doubly difficult in public gatherings; for, in such, there are almost always strongly refractile elements, which paralyze the spirit’s action, and weigh even more heavily on that of the medium. You may hold it as certain, on the other hand, that these phenomena almost always occur in private and spontaneously, and generally without the medium’s knowledge or expectation, for, in fact, they rarely occur when the medium is expecting them; from all of which you may conclude that there is fair ground for suspicion, whenever a medium professes to be able to obtain

these phenomena at his will, in other words, to command the spirits as he would a servant, which is simply absurd. Hold also as a rule for general use, that spirit-phenomena are not intended simply to excite and amuse the curious. If some spirits give themselves up to this sort of manifestation, it can only be for simple phenomena, and not for those that require exceptional conditions, such as are necessary for the bringing of objects into closed rooms.

“Keep in mind, spiritists, that, if it is absurd to repudiate systematically all spirit-phenomena, it is none the less so, on the other hand, to give a blind acceptance to every tale. When tangible phenomena, such as apparitions, clairvoyance, or the movement of objects, occur spontaneously, and, as it were, instantaneously, accept them; I cannot urge you too strongly to accept nothing blindly, to subject every occurrence to a minute and thorough sifting. Believe me, spiritism, rich as it is in sublime and grand phenomena, has nothing to gain from petty manifestations that skilful conjurors may imitate.

“You may reply that these phenomena are useful to convince the skeptic; but remember that, if spiritism did not offer other means of conviction, it would not have numbered at this time the hundredth part of its present adherents. Address yourselves to the heart; it is thus that you will make converts worth gaining. If you consider it useful, for certain people, to proceed by the presentation of physical phenomena, at least present these under circumstances that can give no handle to false interpretation; and, above all, do not attempt to obtain these phenomena under any but their normal conditions; for even facts, when presented under wrong conditions, furnish arguments for the skeptic, instead of convincing them.

ERASTES

99. The phenomenon of transport sometimes offers one very singular peculiarity, inasmuch as certain mediums only obtain it when in a somnambulic state; but this is easily explained. The somnambulic state constitutes a natural release from fleshly trammels, a sort of isolation of the spirit and perispirit, which facilitates the combination of the necessary fluids. This has frequently been the case when objects have been brought in our presence. The following questions were addressed by us, on one occasion, to the spirit by whom the phenomenon of transport was effected but, his answers not being sufficiently clear, we submitted them also to the spirit *Erastes*, who is much more enlightened as regards theoretic knowledge, and who completed what was lacking in the explanations of the other by his very judicious observations. The one is the artisan, the other the scientist; and we gain instruction even by comparing these two intelligences; for we thus find that the mere fact of release from the fleshly body does not suffice to enable a spirit to understand everything.

(1) Will you have the kindness to tell us why it is that, whatever you bring us, comes while the medium is in the magnetic sleep?

“That is owing to the medium’s nature; what I bring, when my medium is asleep, I could bring, with another medium, when awake.”
(2) Why do you make us wait so long for what you bring, and why do you excite the covetousness of the medium, by stimulating his desire to obtain the promised gift?
“It takes time to prepare the fluids which I need for the transport; as to exciting the medium’s desire, I often do so in order to amuse the people who are present, as well as the sleepwalker himself.”
Remark of Erastes. “The spirit who has answered does not know any better; he does not take account of the use of this covetousness which he instinctively excites, without being aware of its effects he thinks he only amuses by so doing, whilst, ill reality, he thus brings about, without suspecting it, a greater emission of fluid. This stimulation is necessitated by the difficulty of the phenomenon; all the greater when it is not spontaneous, and especially with certain mediums.”
(3) Does the production of the phenomenon depend upon the special nature of the medium, and could it be produced, more quickly and easily, with other mediums?
“Its production depends upon the nature of the medium, and cannot take place except with natures between whom there exists the requisite correspondence; as to effecting the transport more quickly, the habit we get into, when we act frequently with the same medium, is of great service to us.”
(4) As regards the influence of the people present, has it any effect in impeding or facilitating the production of the phenomenon?
“When there is disbelief and opposition, we are often much hampered by them we prefer to make our attempts in the presence of believers, and of people versed in spiritism. But I do not mean to say that the ill-will of the incarnated can paralyze us completely.”
(5) Where did you get the flowers and the sugar plums that you have brought us?
“I get the flowers in the gardens; I take those that please me.”
(6) And the sugar plums? The shopkeeper must perceive his loss.
“I take them just where I like; the shopkeeper never perceives it at all, because I put others in their place.”
(7) But the rings you have brought? They are valuable; where did you get them?
Have you not wronged the person from whom you took them?
“I took them from places unknown to anyone, so that nobody can be the worse for my taking them.”
Remark of Erastes – “The fact is insufficiently explained, owing to the want of knowledge on the part of the spirit who is replying. It is quite possible that some wrong may have been done in the matter; but the spirit is unwilling to pass for having committed a larceny. An object can only be replaced by another which is identical with it in form and value;

consequently, if a spirit had the power of substituting an object precisely similar to that which he takes, he would have no motive for taking it, and should rather give the one which serves as a substitute."
(8) Is it possible to bring flowers from another planet?
"No; that is not possible for me."
(To Erastes) Have other spirits this power?
"No, it is not possible, on account of the difference of the atmospheric surroundings."
(9) Could you bring flowers from another hemisphere; from the tropics, for example?
"Yes; if they are on this earth, I could bring them."
(10) These objects you have brought; could you make them disappear and take them back?
"Just as easily as I brought them; I can take them back whenever I like."
(11) Does the bringing of objects give you any trouble, or necessitate anything like labor or fatigue?
"It does not give us any trouble, when we have permission; it might give us a good deal, if we attempted to produce these phenomena without permission."
Remark of Erastes – "He will not admit that it gives him trouble, although it really does; as he is obliged to perform an operation which is, so to say, almost physical in its nature."
(12) What are the difficulties that you meet with?
"Only unfavorable fluidic conditions that hinder our action."
(13) How do you carry an object; do you hold it in your hands?
"No, we envelop it in ourselves."
Remark of Erastes – "He does not explain the operation clearly, for lie does not envelop the object in his own personality; but as his personal fluid is dilatable, penetrable, and expansible, he combines a portion of this fluid of his with a portion of the animalized fluid of the medium, and it is in this combination of fluids that he hides and transports the object to be brought. It is therefore not correct to say that he envelops it in himself."
(14) Could you bring us, with the same facility, an object of considerable weight; of a hundred pounds weight, for instance?
"Weight is nothing to us; we bring you flowers, because a flower is more agreeable than anything heavy."
Remark of Erastes – "What he says is true he could bring two hundred-weight, or any weight, for the weight that exists to your perceptions is annulled in his case: but here again there is a hitch in his explanation. The mass of the combined fluids must be in proportion to the mass of the objects to be moved: in a word, the force employed must be in proportion to the resistance to be overcome; from which it follows, that, if a spirit only brings a flower, or some light thing, it is often because lie does not find in the medium, or in himself, the elements necessary for any greater effort."

(15) Does it sometimes happen that things that disappear, we know not how, have been removed by spirits?
“That happens very frequently, much oftener than you have any idea of; and it might be remedied by asking the spirit to bring back what has disappeared.”
Remark of Erastes – “That is true; nevertheless, what is carried away, is sometimes made away with very effectually, for the things are often conveyed to a great distance. But, as almost the same conditions are required for taking things away as for bringing them, it can only be accomplished by the aid of mediums gifted with special abilities therefore, when anything disappears, it is far more probable that your own carelessness, rather than spirit-action, has caused its disappearance.”
(16) Are some occurrences, which we regard as natural phenomena, really the work of spirits?
“Your daily life is replete with incidents of this character, which you do not understand, because you have not made them a subject of thought, but of which a little reflection would enable you to perceive the real nature.”
Remark of Erastes – “Do not attribute to spirits what is the work of men; but remember that their occult influence is constantly exerted, and gives rise, around you, to various circumstances and incidents necessary to the accomplishment of your acts, and even to your existence.”
(17) Among the objects brought by spirits, may there not be some which are fabricated by them, that is to say, spontaneously produced by the modifications which the universal fluid is made to undergo by spirits?
“Not in my case, for I have no such permission; only an elevated spirit could do this.”
(18) How did you manage to introduce those things, the other day, since the room was entirely closed?
“I brought them in with me, enveloped, so to say, in my substance: the long and the short of it is, ‘tis inexplicable.”
(19) How did you manage to render visible those objects which were invisible an instant before?
“I took away the matter that enveloped them.”
Remark of Erastes – “Strictly speaking, it is not matter that envelops them, but a fluid drawn in part from the perispirit of the medium, and, in part, from that of the operating spirit.”
(20) (To Erastes) Can an object be brought into a room that is perfectly closed; in short, can a spirit spiritualize a material object so that it may pass through matter?
“This is a complex question. A spirit can render material things invisible but not penetrable; he cannot break through the aggregation of matter, for that would be the destruction of the object. An object being rendered invisible, he can bring it into the room when he pleases, and can deprive it of its invisibility at any given moment. It is quite another affair in regard to things that we compose, for, in such cases, we only introduce the elements of

matter, and these elements are essentially penetrable; for we ourselves can penetrate and pass through the most condensed bodies, as easily as the rays of the sun pass through a windowpane; so that we may truly say that we have introduced the object into the place, however closed it may be; but only in such a case.”

CHAPTER 6

Visual Manifestations

Apparitions – Theoretic explanations of apparitions – Theory of hallucination.

100. Of all spirit-manifestations the most interesting, without doubt, are those by which spirits are those by which spirits are able to render themselves visible. We shall see, by the explanation of these phenomena, that there is nothing supernatural in them, any more than in the others; but we will first introduce the answers that have been given to us by spirits on this subject.

(1) Can spirits render themselves visible?

"Yes, especially when you are asleep; but there are who see them while awake, though is less common."

Remark – While the body reposes, the spirit disengages itself from its material bonds; it is then freer, and can more easily see other spirits, with whom it enters into communication. A dream is only a reminiscence of this state; when we remember nothing, we say we have had no dream, but the soul has nonetheless had its eyes open, and enjoyed its liberty. We shall here treat especially of apparitions seen while the seer is awake.

(2) Do spirits who manifest themselves to the sight belong to one class rather than another?

"No, they belong to all classes, the highest as well as the lowest."

(3) Have all spirits the power of manifesting themselves visibly?

"Yes, but they have not always the permission or the wish to do so."

(4) When spirits thus manifest themselves, what is their object?

"That depends upon their nature; their object may be good or bad."

(5) What! Do you assert that permission may be given when their object is a bad one?

"In such cases the apparition is permitted as a trial for those to whom it appears.

The intention of the spirit may be bad, but the result may be useful."

(6) What can be the object of spirits in showing themselves when their intentions are evil?

"The desire to frighten, or sometimes to take revenge.

"What is the object of spirits who come with good intentions?

"To console those who regret them; to prove that they still exist, and are still near you; to give good counsels; and sometimes to ask help for themselves."

(7) What harm would there be, if the possibility of seeing spirits were permanent and general? Would not this be a means of removing doubts from the minds of the most skeptical?

"Men being constantly environed by spirits, the incessant view of the latter would trouble them, would put them out in their work, and would take from

them, in most cases, their freedom of action; thinking themselves alone, men act more freely.
As to the skeptics, they have means enough of conviction, if they would but profit by them. You know that there are people who have seen, and yet who do not believe any the more on that account, for they speak of what they have seen as illusions. Do not vex yourselves about such people; God has them in His keeping."
Remark – It would be as inconvenient to find oneself incessantly in the presence of spirits, as to see the air which surrounds us, or the myriads of microscopic animals around us and upon us. Hence we may conclude that what God does is well done, and that He knows what is good for us more than we do.
(8) If there be inconvenience in seeing spirits, why is it permitted in some cases?
"It is to give you proof that all does not die with the body, and that the soul preserves its individuality after death. The passing glimpse thus afforded is enough to give this proof, and to attest the presence of friends near you, but is attended with no permanent inconvenience."
(9) Is the view of spirits more frequent in worlds which are more advanced than this is?
"The nearer man approaches to the spiritual nature, the more easily he enters into conscious relationship with spirits; it is the grossness of your envelope which renders the perception of ethereal beings rare and difficult."
(10) Is it reasonable to be frightened at the apparition of a spirit?
"Anyone who reflects must see that a spirit, whatever it may be, is less dangerous than a person in the flesh. Spirits go about everywhere; and there is no need to see them, to know that you have them at your side. If a spirit wishes to hurt you, he can do so without showing himself, and with greater certainty when unseen; he is not dangerous because he is a spirit, but he may be so through the subtle influence that he is able to exercise over your thoughts, in turning you from the right path, and urging you to evil."
Remark – People who are afraid when alone, or in the dark, rarely understand the cause of their fear they could not tell you what they are afraid of, but, most assuredly, there is more to be feared in meeting with men than with spirits, for a malefactor is more dangerous while in the flesh than after his death. A lady of our acquaintance, saw, one evening, in her bedroom, an apparition so lifelike that she thought somebody had entered the room, and her first feeling was one of fear. Having ascertained that no one in the flesh was in the room, she said to herself: ''It seems that it was only a spirit: so I can sleep in peace."
(11) Can a person to whom a spirit appears enter into conversation with him?

“Certainly, and, moreover, this is what you should always do under such circumstances. You should ask the spirit who he is, what he wants, and what you can do to be of service to him. If the spirit is unhappy and suffering, he will be soothed by your commiseration; if he is a kindly spirit, he may have come with the intention of giving you good counsel.”

– How, in such a case, can the spirit answer?

“Sometimes he answers with articulate sounds, like a living person, but more frequently, there is transmission of thought.”

(12) When spirits appear with wings, have they wings in reality, or are these wings only a symbolic representation?

“Spirits have no wings; they have no need of them, because, from their spiritual capabilities, they are able to transport themselves everywhere. They assume any appearance they choose, according to the effect they desire to produce on the person to whom they show themselves. Sometimes they appear in ordinary clothing; sometimes enveloped in flowing drapery; sometimes with wings, etc., as attributes of the category of spirits which they represent.”

(13) Are the people we see in dreams always those whom they seem to be by their appearance?

“They are almost always the very people whom your spirit has been to see, or who come to find you, during your sleep.”

(14) Could not mocking spirits assume the appearance of people who are dear to us, and so lead us astray?

“They may assume fantastic appearances, to amuse themselves at your expense; but there are some things that they are not permitted to meddle with.”

(15) Thought itself being a kind of evocation, we can well understand that it may induce the presence of a spirit; but why does it so frequently happen that the people of whom we think most often, and whom we most ardently desire to see again, never appear to us in our dreams, while, on the contrary, we constantly see people who are indifferent to us, and whom we never think of?

“Spirits have not always the power to manifest themselves to your view, even in a dream, notwithstanding your desire to see them; causes which are independent of their will may prevent their doing so. Moreover, this often occurs as a trial, which your most ardent desire is powerless to escape. As to people whom you regard with indifference, although, *you* do not think of *them*, it is quite possible that *they* may think *you*.

Besides, you can form no idea of the relations of the world of spirits; you meet there with a host of acquaintances, old and new, of whom you have no remembrance during your waking hours.”

Remark – When there is no confirmation of visions or apparitions, we may fairly set them down as hallucinations; but, when they are confirmed by events, we cannot attribute them to imagination. Such are, for example, the apparitions so often seen, sometimes in a dream, sometimes in the waking

state, of people of whom we had not been thinking, and who come at the moment of their death, to show us, by various signs, the circumstances of their decease, of which we had no previous idea. Horses have been often found to rear, and refuse to on, in the presence of apparitions which frightened their riders also. If imagination counts for something in the human subject, we can hardly suppose horses to be troubled by it. Again, if the images that we see in dreams were always the reflex of the preoccupations of our waking hours, it would not explain the fact, that we often never dream at all of what we think of most frequently while awake.

(16) Why do certain kinds of visions occur most frequently during illness?

"They occur as frequently in perfect health; but the material bonds are relaxed during illness, when the weakness of the body leaves the spirit more free; so that it then enters more easily into communication with other spirits.

(17) Spontaneous apparitions appear to be more frequent in some countries than in others. Is it that some races are better endowed than others for receiving this kind of manifestation?

"Apparitions, noises, all kinds of manifestations, in short, occur equally, all over the earth; but they present distinctive characteristics according to the peoples among whom they occur. Among those nations, for example, where writing is in little use, you will not find writing mediums; elsewhere, they abound. Again, noises and movements of objects are more frequent than intelligent communications, because these last are least esteemed, and least sought after."

(18) How is it that apparitions generally take place during the night? – Is it owing to the effect of silence and darkness on the imagination?

"It is for the same reason that you see stars during the night, and do not see them during the day. A strong light effaces an apparition of slight force, but it is an error to suppose that night has anything to do with the matter. Interrogate those who have seen apparitions, and you will find that the greater number of them have occurred during the day."

Remark – Apparitions are much more frequent and more general than is usually supposed; but many people do not speak of them from fear of ridicule, while others attribute them to illusion. If facts of this nature appear to be more common among certain peoples, it is because these facts, true or false, are more carefully recorded in the traditions of those peoples, multiplied, as well as amplified, by the taste for the marvelous to which certain localities are more or less predisposed by their aspect, and other natural conditions; the credulity of the inhabitants dressing tip the commonest occurrences in the garb of the supernatural. The silence of sparsely peopled regions, the abruptness of ravines, the moaning of the wind through the trees, the roar of the tempest, mountain echoes, the fantastic shapes of clouds, shadows, mirages, all tend to excite illusions in the minds of the rude and the unlettered, who recount, with entire belief, what they have seen, or fancy they have seen. But side by side with fiction,

is a reality; the establishing of the latter, freed from the puerile and debasing accessories added by the former, is one of the most important results of the serious study of spiritist doctrine.

(19) Does the seeing of spirits take place in the normal state or only in the ecstatic state?

"It may take place under perfectly normal conditions; nevertheless, people who see them are often in a peculiar state, bordering on trance, which gives them a kind of second-sight." (See *The Spirits' Book*, No. 447)

(20) Do those people who see spirits see them with their eyes?

"They think they do; but, in reality, it is their soul that sees, for they can see them with their eyes shut."

(21) How does a spirit make himself visible?

"As in all other manifestations, by employing certain properties of the perispirit, which may be made to undergo a Variety of modifications, at the will of the spirit."

(22) Can that which is the spirit himself be made visible, or can it only be manifested by the perispirit?

"To you, in your materialized state, spirits can only manifest themselves with the aid of their semi-material envelope, which is the intermediary that enables them to act on your senses. It is with this envelope that they sometimes appear to you under the human form or any other; whether in your dreams or in your waking state, whether in the light or in the dark."

(23) Is it by the condensation of the fluid of the perispirit that the spirit renders himself visible?

"Condensation is not the right word, but rather a term of comparison which may aid you to form an approximate idea of the phenomenon; for, there is, in reality, no condensation. The combination of fluids produces, in the perispirit, a peculiar condition, to which nothing in your experience offers any analogy, and which renders it perceptible by you."

(24) Are the spirits who appear to us inaccessible to the touch; could they not be laid hold of?

"When in their normal state, you could no more seize them than you could seize a shadow: but, they can, nevertheless, make themselves felt by your sense of touch, and leave traces of their presence. They can even, in certain cases, render themselves tangible for a short time; which proves that there is something material in common between them and you."

(25) Are all people so constituted as to be able to see spirits?

"Yes, during sleep; but not in the waking state. In sleep, the soul sees without any intermediary; while you are awake, it is always influenced more or less by your organs. This is why the conditions are not quite the same when you are awake as when you are asleep."

(26) Where does the ability to see spirits while awake come from?

"That ability depends on the organization, and on the greater or less degree of facility with which the fluid of the seer combines with that of the spirit. It is, therefore, not sufficient for the spirit to desire to manifest himself; it is

also necessary that he should find the requisite aptitude in the person by whom he wishes to be seen."
Can this ability be developed by exercise?
"Yes, like all other abilities; but it is one of those of which it is well to await the natural development, for fear of Over-exciting the imagination. A general and permanent sight of spirits is exceptional, and does not appertain to the normal state of humanity."
(27) Is it possible to obtain the apparition of a spirit by summoning him to appear?
"Sometimes, but very rarely; apparitions are almost always spontaneous. To evoke with authority, you must be endowed with a special ability."
(28) Can spirits render themselves visible under any other than the human form?
"The human form is the normal form; a spirit can vary the appearance of this form, but it is always the human type."
Cannot they manifest themselves under the appearance of a flame?
"They can produce flames and lights, as they can any other appearances, in order to attest their presence; but these appearances are not the spirits themselves. A flame is often only a mirage, or an emanation of the perispirit, of which, in all such cases, it is only a part: the perispirit only appears, in its entirety, in visions."
(29) What are we to think of the idea which attributes the Will-o'-the-Wisp to the presence of souls or spirits?
"Such an idea is mere superstition; the result of ignorance. The physical cause of the Will-o'-the-Wisp is well known."
– Was the blue flame, said to have been seen on the head of Servius Tullius, when a child, a fable or a reality?
"It was a reality, produced by a familiar spirit who desired to warn his mother.
The mother, a clairvoyant medium, perceived the radiation of her child's spirit-guide. All clairvoyant mediums do not see with the same degree of Vision, just as your writing mediums do not all write the same thing. While this mother saw only a flame, another medium might have seen the spirit's body."
(30) Could spirits present themselves under the form of animals?
"That may happen, but it is only very inferior spirits who assume such a form. It could not, in any case, be more than a momentary appearance: for it would be absurd to believe that any veritable animal could be the incarnation of a spirit. Animals are always animals and nothing else."
Remark – Superstitious ideas suggest that spirits animate certain animals. Only a very gullible or moonstruck, imagination could see anything supernatural in the peculiarities sometimes displayed by animals; but fear often makes people see things that have no real existence. Fear, however, is not the only source of this idea we knew a lady, a very intelligent person in other respects, who had an unbounded affection for a large black cat,

because she believed it to be of a *super-animal* nature. This lady had never heard of spiritism; if she had known anything of it, she would have known that such a metamorphosis is impossible.

Theoretic explanation of Apparitions.

101. The most ordinary mode of apparition is that which takes place in sleep, through dreams; such apparitions are called visions. It does not enter into the plan of our present work to examine all the peculiarities that are presented by dreams; we will merely state that they may be: the actual sight of objects present or absent; a retrospective view of the past; and, in some exceptional cases, a presentiment of the future. Dreams are also, in many cases, allegorical pictures that spirits bring before our eyes; the good, in order to give us useful warnings and salutary counsels; the imperfect, in order to lead us into error, or to flatter our passions. The theory we are about to place before the reader is applicable to dreams, as it is to all cases of apparitions. (See *The Spirits' Book*, No. 400; *et seq*). As for what is vulgarly called "the interpretation of dreams," we should consider it to be an insult to the common sense of our readers, were we to attempt to point out its absurdity.

102 – So-called apparitions, take place when we are awake, and in the full enjoyment of our abilities. They are often vague and undecided; usually presenting themselves under a vaporous and diaphanous form. At first, in many cases, only a whitish light is perceived, the outlines of which become gradually more distinct; at other times, the form of the apparition is clearly defined, every feature being plainly seen. In such cases the air and aspect of the figure before us are the same as those of the spirit when in the flesh.

A spirit being able to assume any and every appearance, he presents himself under that by which he can best obtain recognition, if such be his desire. Although, as a spirit, he has no corporeal infirmity, he can appear as if maimed, lame, humpbacked, wounded, or scarred, should he consider this to be necessary to his identification.

Aesop, for example, is not deformed as a spirit; but if we evoked him as Aesop, though he may have had many subsequent incarnations, he would show himself as Aesop, with his ugliness, his humped back, and his traditional costume. It is worthy of notice that, while the head, trunk, and arms, are always clearly defined, the lower limbs except under particular circumstances, are less clearly shown, and that apparitions rarely walk, but seem to glide, like shadows. Their costume generally consists of a drapery, terminating in long floating folds; their hair is wavy and graceful; such, at least, is the usual appearance of spirits who have retained none of their terrestrial peculiarities. But ordinary spirits, those whom we have known, generally preserve the costume that they wore in the latter part of their earthly existence. They often show themselves with appearances indicative of their degree of elevation; with a halo or wings, for example, in the case of those whom we may consider as "angels;" while others present themselves

with the appearance of objects referring to their terrestrial occupations. Thus, a warrior may appear with his amour, a learned man with his books, an assassin with a dagger etc. Spirits of such degree have a beautiful countenance and a serene and noble air, while the degraded have a fierce and bestial expression, and often show traces of the crimes they have committed, or of the punishments they have committed, or of the punishments they have endured. This question of spirit-aspect, with its various accessories, is perhaps what excites most astonishment among the uninitiated. We shall return to this subject in a special chapter, because of its bearing upon other very important phenomena.

103. We have said that apparitions frequently present a vaporous appearance; in certain cases, we might compare them to an image reflected in a sheet of glass; an image which not withstanding its distinctness, does not prevent our seeing through it, the objects which are behind the glass. That is how mediums generally perceive them. They seem to be coming and going, entering the room or leaving it, moving about among the people who are present in the flesh, listening with interest to their conversation, and taking, at least in the case of the commoner sort of spirits, an active part in all that is going on around them. They are seen to approach a particular person, suggesting ideas, endeavoring to influence him, or consoling him if sorrowful; others show themselves scornful or mocking; all appear to be pleased or disappointed, according to the results they achieve; in a word, the world around us seems to be a counterpart of the corporeal world. Such is the hidden world which surrounds us, and in the midst of which we live without suspecting it, just as we live, without perceiving it, in the very midst of the countless myriads of the microscopic world. The microscope has revealed to us the world of the infinitely little, of which we were formerly unaware; spiritism, aided by clairvoyant mediums, has revealed to us the world of spirits, showing us that the latter are one of the active forces of nature. With the aid of clairvoyant mediums, we have been enabled to study the invisible world, and to acquaint ourselves with its habits; as a nation of blind men might study the visible world, with the aid of those who have eyes. (See, in the chapter on *Mediums*, the article concerning *Clairvoyant Mediums*)

104. Sometimes a spirit, who desires or who is able to appear, assumes a form still more defined, and having all the appearance of a solid body, so as to produce a complete illusion, causing us to believe that we have a corporeal body before us. In some cases, and tinder certain circumstances, this apparent tangibility becomes a reality; that is to say, we can touch the spirit, handle it, and feel the same resistance, the same warmth, as we should feel in a fleshly body; but this does not hinder it from vanishing with the celerity of lightning. In such cases, it is not the eye alone which attests the reality of their presence, but also the sense of touch; and though we might attribute a merely visual apparition to illusion, or to a sort of fascination, we cannot do so when we are able to seize and handle the

apparition, or when the latter seizes and touches us. The phenomena of tangible apparitions are the rarest of all; but those which have appeared, in these latter days, through the influence of certain powerful mediums, confirm and explain many historical statements in regard to people who, informer days, have shown themselves, after death, with all the appearances of reality. For the rest, as we have said however extraordinary such phenomena may be, their marvellousness disappears when we know the means by which they are produced; for we then see that, so far from being a derogation from the laws of nature, they are only another application of those laws.

105. The perispirit, in virtue of its nature, is invisible in its normal state, like a multitude of fluids which are known to exist, but which we have never seen; but it can also, like certain fluids, undergo modifications which render it perceptible to the sight, sometimes by a kind of condensation, sometimes by a changed arrangement of its molecules; and it is then that it appears in a vaporous form. What, for want of a better term, and merely as a comparison, we may term the *condensation* of the perispirit, gives to the latter for the time being, all the properties of a solid and tangible body; but the perispirit, thus condensed, can instantly resume its ethereal and invisible state. We may understand something of this effect by comparing the perispirit to aqueous vapor, which changes from an invisible state to that of mist, becomes liquid or solid, and again becomes invisible. ‘These different states of its perispirit are determined by the will of the spirit, and do not result from the action of an exterior physical cause, as is the casein the changes which take place in the state of gases. When a spirit appears, it is because he puts his perispirit into the necessary condition to render it visible; but the mere effort of his will does not suffice to this end, for the modification of the perispirit is effected by its combination with the personal fluid of the medium, which combination is not always possible; a fact which explains why spirits are not generally visible. Evidently, therefore, it is not enough that the spirit desires to show himself; it is not enough that the mortal desires to see him it is necessary that the fluids of the incarnate and disincarnate spirits should be able to enter into the requisite combination, that there should be a sort of affinity between them, and, probably, that the emission of fluid from the mortal should be sufficiently abundant to enable the spirit to effect the transformation of his perispirit. It is probable, also, that there are other conditions, of the operation of which we are still in ignorance; and, moreover, it is necessary that the spirit should have received permission to make himself visible to a given person; a permission which is not always accorded.

106. Another property of the perispirit, resulting from its ethereal nature, is its power of penetration. No species of matter constitutes an obstacle to its passage; it penetrates all material bodies as easily as light penetrates transparent ones. No enclosure can shut out spirits; they visit the prisoner in his dungeon, as easily as the inhabitant of the open country.

107. Apparitions seen in the waking state are neither new nor rare. They have occurred in all ages; history recounts a vast number of them; but we need not go back so far, for they are very common in our own times. They are especially frequent in connection with the death of people who, being absent, come to visit their relations or friends at the moment of departure. They often appear to have no determined object; but it may be affirmed that spirits who thus manifest themselves are usually drawn by sympathy. There are very few people who are not cognizant or unquestionably authentic facts of this character.

108. We will conclude our examination of this part of our subject, by a reference to an optical effect which has given rise to the singular hypothesis of *globular spirits*.

The air is not always absolutely limpid; and its molecules when rarified by heat often become visible. Some people have taken this rarified air for a mass of spirits fluttering in space! –We allude to this opinion only as an absurdity. Another opinion, equally absurd is that spirits can be seen in the opaque specks which are sometimes formed in the aqueous humour of the eye, and which, being held in suspension in the liquid of which they follow the movements, assume the appearance of minute disks that seem to float in the atmosphere. We have seen people who have taken these disks for spirits, following and accompanying them everywhere; a fancy about as rational as that which sees a man in the moon. Others again have taken the black films that are sometimes seen in the eye for evil spirits.

Illusions of every kind can only result from superficial observation. A careful study of the nature of spirits, with the aid of the means that practical spiritism affords us, will enable the inquirer to keep clear of hasty and fanciful inductions, while enlightening him in regard to the reality of spirit-manifestations. Just as it is the duty of every spiritist to combat the erroneous judgments which are based on ignorance of the latter, it is also his duty to combat the erroneous suppositions suggested by unreasoning enthusiasm, and which cannot fail to render spiritism ridiculous in the eyes of those who are acquainted with it only through the fanciful exaggerations of some of its adherents.

109. The perispirit, as we have seen, is the foundation of all spirit-manifestations, to which the knowledge of this integral part of a spirit’s personality gives us the key; a key which, let us never forget, has been furnished by the spirits themselves, for it is by them that the existence, nature, and functions of the perispirit have been made known to us. This knowledge enables us to understand the action of spirits on matter, the movement of inert bodies, the mode of production of aural, visual, and tangible phenomena; it will also be found equally available for the explanation of the other phenomena which we shall have to examine, before we proceed to the study of spirit-communications properly so-called, and which we shall comprehend all the more easily with the aid of the

preliminary knowledge we shall thus have acquired of the general principles on which they rest.

110. We are far from regarding the theory which we are about to set forth, as being absolutely true in every minute particular, or as giving an exhaustive explanation of the subjects with which it deals. The instructions we have already derived from our spirit-teachers will doubtless be completed or rectified by future studies; but, however incomplete or imperfect our theory at this time, it will at least assist us to comprehend the possibility of certain facts, by showing that they result from the action of natural causes, and are therefore in no way supernatural. Regarded as a hypothesis, it is one the reasonableness and probability of which cannot be denied, and which may fairly claim to be worth all the arguments employed by our opponents to prove that there is nothing but illusion, phantasmagoria, and deception, in spirit-phenomena.

Theory of Hallucination

111. Those who do not admit that there is an incorporeal and invisible world, fancy they can explain everything by the word *hallucination*. The definition of this word is well known; it means the error, the illusion, of one who believes himself to experience perceptions which he does not experience in reality; it comes from the Latin word, *hallucinari*, to err; but the learned have not yet, so far as we know, explained the cause of the fact expressed by this word.

As optics and physiology appear to have no secrets for their devotees, how is it that the latter have not yet explained the nature and source of the images, which, under certain circumstances, present themselves to our consciousness? They would fain explain everything by the laws of matter; let them then deduce from those laws a theory of hallucination, capable of giving a rational explanation of the facts comprised under that term.

112. The cause of dreams has never yet been explained by science, which attributes them to an effect of the imagination, but does not tell us what imagination is, nor how it produces the clear and distinct images which sometimes appear to us.

Scientific men are too much given to explaining an unknown thing by another thing as little known, leaving the problems they deal with very much as they were. It is often said that dreams are a recollection of the occupations of our waking state; but, even admitting this solution, which is no solution at all, there still remains the question, what is the magic mirror which thus preserves the traces of things, and, above all, how are we to explain the visions we sometimes see of real things, never seen by us in our waking state, and about which we never thought? Spiritism alone can give us the key to this strange phenomenon, which is only overlooked because it is so very common, like all the other wonders of nature that we are so apt to trample under foot.

The votaries of science have disdained to trouble themselves about hallucinations; but whether real or not, they nevertheless constitute an order of phenomena that physiology ought to be able to explain, under pain of avowing its insufficiency. If; some of these days, a scientific man should undertake to give, not a mere definition, but a physiological explanation, of this class of phenomena, we shall see how far his theory covers the whole ground; he must not omit the very common facts of the apparition of people at the moment of their death, and he must show us the source of the coincidence of the apparition with the death of the person. If this coincidence had occurred but once, we might attribute it to chance; but the fact is of frequent recurrence, and chance is not recurrent. If the person who saw the apparition were already possessed with the idea that the party appearing was about to die, we might attribute the apparition to imagination; but it generally happens that the person seen is not in the thoughts of the seer at the moment of the apparition, so that imagination has nothing to do with it. Still less can the imagination theory explain the presentation of the circumstances of a death, the idea of which never entered our minds.

Will the partisans of hallucination assume that the soul (supposing they admit the existence of the soul) has moments of over-excitement, and of abnormal power? If so, we agree with them, for this may be the case, but when what is seen is proved by events to have been *real*, we must drop the theory of illusion. If the soul, in its excitement, sees an object which is not present, it must transport itself to that object; and if our soul can transport itself to an absent person, why should not the soul of an absent person transport itself to us? Let those who adopt the theory of hallucination explain all this; and let them not forget that a theory which is opposed by facts is necessarily false or incomplete.

While awaiting the explanation demanded, we ask attention to the following considerations on the subject.

113. Facts prove that there are veritable apparitions, which spiritism is perfectly competent to account for, and which can only be denied by those who admit of nothing beyond the bodily organism but, besides real visions, do what are called hallucinations also occur? We reply, that such do undoubtedly occur. What, then, is the source of the latter? It is the spirits themselves who assist us to explain this point, for our explanation appears to us to be fully implied in the answers given by spirits to the following questions:

– Are visions always real, or are they not sometimes the effect of hallucination?

When one sees in a dream or otherwise, the devil, for example, or any other fantastic appearance which has no real existence, is not such an appearance a product of the imagination?

“Yes, sometimes, in the case of people whose minds are excited by stories which leave a strong impression, and which they carry in their memory until

they fancy they see what has no real existence. But we have already said that a spirit, with the aid of its semi-material envelope, can assume any and every form for manifestation. Thus, a mocking spirit can appear with horns and claws, if it pleases him so to play with your credulity; just as a good spirit can show himself with wings and a radiant countenance."

Can we regard as apparitions the faces and other images which often present themselves when we are halt asleep, or when we merely close our eyes?

"As soon as the senses grow torpid, the spirit disengages itself, and is able to see, whether far or near, what it could not see with the bodily eyes. The images then seen are frequently visions, but they may also be an effect of the impressions that the view of certain objects has left on the brain, which retains traces of them as it does of sounds.

The spirit, when disengaged, sees, in its own brain, these imprints which are fixed therein as in a daguerreotype. From their variety and their intermingling are formed fantastic but fugitive wholes, which disperse again almost immediately, in spite of the efforts made to retain them. It is to an analogous cause that you must attribute many fantastic apparitions which have nothing of reality in them, and which frequently occur during illness."

It is certain that memory is the result of impressions preserved by the brain; by what singular arrangement is it that these impressions, so numerous and so varied, are not inextricably confused? That is an impenetrable mystery; but it is not stranger than the crossing of the sonorous undulations which pass athwart each other in the air, and vet are nonetheless distinct. In a healthy and well-organized brain, these impressions are clear and precise; in a state less favorable, they become faint and confused, which produces loss of memory and confusion of ideas a result that appears less extraordinary, if we admit, with phrenologists, a special destination of each part, and even of each fiber, of the brain. Images which come to the brain through the eyes leave in them an impression, so that we may remember a picture, as though we had it before us; but this is always an act of memory, for we do not *see* the object thus present to our mental eye. In the state of emancipation, the soul looks into the brain, and finds those images therein; those, especially, which have struck it the most, according to its personal idiosyncrasy, prepossessions or disposition. Thus, it finds again, in its brain, the impress of religious events, of diabolical, dramatic, or worldly scenes, the figures of fantastic animals, which it has seen at some previous period in paintings or has heard or read of for recitals also leave their impress. Thus the soul really *sees*; but what it sees is only an image daguerreotyped on the brain.

In the normal state, these images are fugitive and ephemeral, because the cerebral organs perform their functions freely; but in illness, the brain being always more or less enfeebled, the equilibrium of the organs is lost. Some of them retain their activity, while others are partially paralyzed: hence the permanence of certain images, which are not effaced, as when in

a normal state, by the pre-occupations of external life. This is veritable hallucination, and the determining cause of fixed ideas.

It will be seen that we have explained this anomaly by a well known physiological law, that of cerebral impression but we have also had to assume the intervention of the soul. If the materialists have not yet been able to give a satisfactory solution of this phenomenon, it is because they do not admit of a soul; and they will say that our explanation is worth nothing, because we assume the very point which is contested. Contested by whom? – By them; but admitted by the immense majority of mankind, ever since men have lived upon the earth; and the negation of the few cannot be accepted as authoritative.

Is our explanation a sufficient one? – We give it for what it is worth, for want of another, and as one which may be regarded as a convenient hypothesis, while waiting for a better one. Does it explain all cases of vision? Certainly not; but we defy physiologists to give, from their point of view, any explanation that can do this; for, when they have pronounced their sacramental words, *excitement* and *imagination*, they have not advanced the solution of the problem a single step. Therefore, as all theories of hallucination are insufficient to explain all the facts referred to, it follows that those facts imply something else besides hallucination properly so-called. Our theory would fail if we applied it to all cases of visions, because there are cases which contradict it; but it may, nevertheless, be true in regard to some kinds of visions.

CHAPTER 7

Bi-Corporeity and Transfiguration

Apparitions of the spirit of people in the flesh – Doubles – Saint Alfonso of Liguori and Saint Antony of Padua – Vespasian – Transfiguration – Invisibility.

114. Bi-corporeity and transfiguration are Varieties of the order of visual manifestations; and, strange as they may at first appear, it will be easily seen, from the explanation we are enabled to give of them, that they are not outside the order of natural phenomena. Both are consequences of the principle that what is true of the properties of the perispirit after death is true of the perispirit of people in the flesh. We have seen that, during sleep, the spirit recovers a portion of its normal freedom, because it partially isolates itself from the body; a state in which we have often had the opportunity of observing it. The spirit, whether a man be alive or dead, possesses at all times its semi-material envelope, which, through the action of the same causes that we have already set forth, may temporarily acquire both visibility and tangibility.

Unquestionable facts have removed all doubt on this point. We will only adduce here a few cases for which we can vouch, from our own personal knowledge; but many of our readers will probably be able to recall analogous facts, by consulting their memory.

115. The wife of a friend of ours frequently saw entering her chamber, during the night, whether she had a light or not, a woman who sold fruit in her neighborhood, whom she knew by sight, but to whom she had never spoken. This apparition terrified her all the more, because at that time she knew nothing of spiritism, and because the vision frequently recurred. The fruit seller was not only in the flesh when these apparitions took place, but was probably in bed and asleep at the moment of their occurrence. While her material body was at home, her spirit and her fluidic body were in this lady’s room; moved by what motive we cannot say. In such a case a spiritist, acquainted with the subject of apparitions, would have asked her visitant what she wanted; but, as the lady in question knew nothing of such things, the idea of doing so never entered her mind. Each time the apparition occurred, it vanished without her knowing how; and, after each disappearance, she assured herself that all the doors were perfectly closed, and that no one could have entered the room: a precaution which proved to her that she had been really awake, and was not under the influence of a dream. At other times, this lady saw, in the same way, a man whom she did not know; but, one day she saw her brother, who was then in California. He had so exactly the appearance of a real person, that, at first, she thought he must have returned, and was about to speak to him; but he disappeared before she had time to do so. A letter afterwards received showed that he was not dead.

This lady was what may be called a natural clairvoyant medium; but, at this time, as we said before, she had never heard that mediums existed.

116. Another lady, who lives in a country town, being seriously ill, saw, one night about ten o'clock, in her bedroom, an old gentleman, an inhabitant of the same town, whom she sometimes met in society, but with whom she was but very slightly acquainted. This gentleman was sitting in an armchair, at the foot of her bed; he took, from time to time, a pinch of snuff, and looked as though he were watching her.

Surprised at such a visit, at such an hour, she was about to ask him the motive of his coming, but he made a sign to her not to speak, and to go to sleep; several times she was about to speak to him, but, each time, he renewed the signal, and, at last, she fell asleep. Some days afterwards, having recovered from her illness, she received a visit from the same gentleman, but at a more suitable hour, and, this time, it was really he; he wore the same clothes, carried the same snuff box, and his manner was just as before. Persuaded that he had visited her during her illness, she thanked him for his kindness in coming to her; but the gentleman, much surprised, told her that he had not had the pleasure of seeing her for a long time. The lady, who was cognizant of spirit-phenomena, saw at once what had occurred; but, not caring to enter into explanation of the matter, contented herself with saying that she had probably been dreaming.

"As was no doubt the case!" the skeptic will say; but it is certain that this lady was not asleep, any more than the one first mentioned. If she had been dreaming, she must therefore have been dreaming when wide awake; in other words, she must have been laboring under a hallucination. What a glorious word that is! What a comprehensive explanation of everything that we do not comprehend! As we have already sufficiently refuted this objection, we will continue to address ourselves to those who are able to understand us.

117. Here is a fact still more characteristic, and one which we should be curious to see explained by the theory of an excited imagination.

A gentleman, living in the country, would never marry, notwithstanding the persuasions of his family. They were very anxious that he should form an alliance with a lady, living in a neighboring town, who he had never seen. One day, while in his bedroom, he was struck with astonishment at seeing before him a young girl, dressed in white, with a wreath of flowers on her head. She informed him that she was betrothed to him, and held out her hand, which he took in his, and on which he saw an engagement ring. A few moments afterwards, she vanished. Taken aback by this strange occurrence, and having assured himself that he was quite awake, he asked the people of the house if anyone had come in during the day; but they assured him that they had seen no one. A year afterwards, yielding to the renewed solicitations of his relations, he made up his mind to go and see the young lady who had been so strongly recommended to him. He arrived in the town where she lived on the day of the *Fête-Dieu*; all the townsfolk were

returning from the procession, and one of the first people he saw, on entering the dwelling of the young lady's family, was a young girl whom he instantly recognized as the person who had appeared to him a year before. She was dressed just as he had seen her, for the apparition, we should have stated, took place on the *Fête-Dieu* of the preceding year.

He was struck dumb with amazement; the young lady, on catching sight of him, uttered a cry of surprise and fainted. On recovering consciousness, she declared that she had already seen the gentleman, on that very day, the year before. The acquaintance, so strangely begun, ended in a marriage. All this occurred about the year 1835, before spiritism had been heard of; and besides, both the gentleman and the lady were extremely prosaic, matter-of-fact people, with imaginations as little excitable as could well be conceived of.

It will perhaps be surmised that these people may have had their minds filled with the idea of the proposed union between them, and that this pre-occupation produced an hallucination in both of them; but we must not forget that, on the husband's side, indifference had been the predominant feeling, and that it was not until a year after the apparition had occurred, that he made up his mind to go and see the young lady in question.

Those who would explain the matter as being a case of hallucination are hound to explain the *double* apparition (for the young lady also saw the gentleman the year before), the coincidence of the festival-day and of the costume, and the mutual recognition of the parties; circumstances which could not be the product of the imagination.

118. Before going farther, we must reply to a question that will certainly be asked, *viz.*, how can a body live while the spirit is absent? We reply, that it is possible for the body to live with only the organic life, which is independent of the spirits presence. But we must add, that, during earth-life, the spirit is never completely detached from the body. Spirits, as well as certain clairvoyant mediums, perceive that the spirit of one in the flesh, when away from the body, is united to it by a luminous trail, which reaches to the body a phenomenon which never occurs when the body is dead, for then the separation is complete. It is by this channel of communication that the spirit is instantaneously informed, however far away he may be, of the need which the body may have of his presence and he then returns to the body with the swiftness of lightning. It follows, therefore, that the body can never die during the spirit's absence, and that the spirit, on his return, can never find the door of his fleshly habitation closed against him, as some romancers have pretended in their imaginary tales. (See *Spirits' Book*, No. 400, *et seq*)

119. But to return to our subject. The spirit of a person in the flesh, when partially disengaged from the body, can show himself just as well as that of one who has departed this life, and with all the appearance of reality; and may even, through the means already described, acquire a momentary tangibility. This is the phenomenon designated as *bi-corporeity*, which has

given rise to the stories of *doubles*, that is to say, of individuals who have been proved to have been simultaneously present in two different places. Here are two examples of this fact, taken, not from mere popular legends, but from ecclesiastical history.

Saint Alfonso of Liguori was canonized before the lapse of the usual period after his death, because he was seen simultaneously in two different places, which was accounted a miracle.

When Saint Antony of Padua was in Spain, and while he was one day preaching, his father, who was at Padua, was being led to death, having been accused of murder. At the moment when he was about to be executed, Saint Antony appeared, proved his father to be innocent, and pointed out the real criminal, who underwent the punishment of his crime. It was subsequently ascertained that, at this time, Saint Antony had not left Spain.

Saint Alfonso, having been evoked by us, for interrogation in regard to these occurrences, the following conversation took place between us:

(1) Can you give us an explanation of this phenomenon?

"Yes; a man who, as the result of his moral advancement, has attained to a certain degree of dematerialization, can show himself in a place other than that in which his body is, and by the following means. Finding sleep to be stealing upon him, he asks of God that his spirit may be enabled to transport itself to a given place. If his request is granted, his spirit abandons his fleshly body, as soon as the latter falls asleep, and, accompanied by a *part* of his perispirit, leaves the gross material body in a state closely bordering on death. I say *bordering on* death, because there still remains in the body a link which cannot be defined, but which keeps up its union with the perispirit and the soul. The perispirit then appears in the place where the spirit desires to show himself."

(2) Your statement does not explain our question, as regards the visibility and the tangibility of the perispirit.

"The spirit, finding himself disengaged from the bonds of matter, according to his degree of elevation, can render himself tangible by a special action on matter."

(3) Is the sleep of the body indispensable, in order that the spirit may appear in another place?

"The soul can divide itself when it feels itself attracted to a place, other than that in which its body is. It may happen that the body is not asleep when this takes place, though that is a very rare occurrence; but, on such occasions, the body is never in a perfectly normal state, it is always more or less entranced."

Remark – The soul does not "divide itself" in the literal sense of those words; it radiates in different directions, and can thus manifest itself on several points without being divided, just as a light can be simultaneously reflected in several mirrors.

(4) How would it be if a man, whose spirit is appearing elsewhere while his body is asleep, were suddenly awakened?

“That could not happen, because, if anyone approached his body, with the intention of awaking it, the spirit would re-enter it, before the intention could be executed; for the spirit would read the thoughts of the intending disturber.”

The same explanation has repeatedly been given to us, by the spirits of people deceased as well as living. Saint Alfonso explains the fact of the double presence; but he does not give us the theory of visibility and of tangibility.

120. Tacitus reports an analogous fact:

“During the months passed by Vespasian in Alexandria, awaiting the periodical return of the summer winds and the season when the sea is smoothest, various prodigies took place, showing the favor of heaven, and the interest which the gods seemed to take in that prince.

“These prodigies increased Vespasian’s desire to visit the sacred sojourn of the god, and to consult him concerning the empire. He gave orders that the temple should be kept closely shut, so that no one but himself might enter it, when, being entirely absorbed in anticipation of what the oracle was about to utter, he perceived behind him one of the principal Egyptians, named Basilides, whom he knew to be retained by illness at some distance from Alexandria. He questioned the priests, as to whether Basilides had been that day in the temple; he inquired of the passers-by, whether they had seen him in the town; at last he sent horsemen, and acquired through them the Certainty that, at the moment of the apparition, Basilides was eighty miles away. He then no longer doubted that the vision was supernatural; and the name of Basilides was accepted by him in lieu of the oracle.”

121. The individual who appears simultaneously in two different places has, then, two bodies; but, of these, one alone is real, the other is only an appearance: we may say that the first lives with the organic life, and the second, with that of the soul; on awaking, the two bodies re-unite, and the life of the soul re-enters the material body.

We have no reason to suppose that, in this state of partial separation, the two bodies can possess active and intelligent vitality, simultaneously, and in the same degree. It follows, moreover, from what we have just said, that the real body could not die, and the apparent body still remains visible the approach of death always recalling the spirit to the body, if only for an instant. It also follows that the apparent body could not be killed, because it is not organic, and is not formed of flesh and bone; it would instantly disappear, if anyone tried to kill it.

122. Let us now consider the second phenomenon, that of *transfiguration*. This consists in the change of aspect of a living body. As an illustration of this phenomenon, we adduce a fact that occurred in the years 1858 and 1859, in the neighborhood of St Etienne, and for the authenticity of which we can vouch. A young lady, about fifteen years of age, had the singular ability of transforming herself; that is to say, she could assume, at times, the

appearance of people who were dead: the illusion was so complete that the person simulated appeared to be actually present, so exact was the resemblance of features, expression, voice, and even of peculiarities of speech. This phenomenon occurred hundreds of times, without the girl's will having anything to do with it. She often assummed the appearance of her brother, who had been dead many years, presenting the similitude not only of his face, but his height, and the size of his body. A physician of the place, who had several times witnessed these strange occurrences, made the following experiment, with a view to assuring himself that he was not under an illusion.

We have the fact from his own lips, from the girl's father, and from several other ocular witnesses, of most honorable character, and unquestionable veracity. It occurred to the physician to weigh this young lady, first in her normal state, and then in her state of transfiguration, when she had assumed the appearance of her brother, who was more than twenty years of age when he died, and much larger and stronger than his sister. He did so, and found that, *in her transfigured state*, *her weight was almost doubled*. This experiment was conclusive, and rendered it impossible to attribute her appearance to an optical illusion. Let us try to explain this fact, which, at one time, would have been called a miracle, but which we may now simply speak of as "a phenomenon."

123. Transfiguration, in certain cases, may be caused simply by a muscular contraction which gives so new an expression to the face as to render the person no longer recognizable. We have often observed this, in the case of certain sleepwalkers, but in such cases, the transformation is not radical; a woman, for instance, may appear young or old, handsome or plain, but she will still appear as a woman, and she will not increase or diminish in weight. In this instance, it is quite evident that there was something more than this, something which only a knowledge of the perispirit will enable us to explain.

We assume, as a fundamental principle, that the spirit has the power of giving to his perispirit every kind of appearance, and that, by modifications of its atomic conditions, he can give it temporary visibility, tangibility, and consequently *opacity*.

We also lay it down as a rule that the perispirit of a person in the flesh, when partially separated from the body, can be made to undergo the same transformations, and that this change of state is effected by the combinations of fluids to which we have so often adverted.

Let us, then, imagine the perispirit of a person in the flesh, not as *separated from* the body, but as *radiating around* the body, so as to surround it like vapor. In this state, the perispirit can be made to undergo the same modifications as if it were entirely separated from it; by causing the perispirit to lose its transparency, the body may be made to disappear and become invisible, being veiled, so to say, by the perispirit, as though surrounded by a mist. It may even change its aspect, and become luminous,

if such be the will, or in the power, of the spirit. A second spirit, combining his own fluid with that of the former one, may substitute his own appearance for that of the former spirit, and so completely that the real body may be made to disappear under an exterior fluidic envelope, the appearance of which may be changed indefinitely at the will of the spirit-operators. Such appears to be the true cause of the strange and very rare phenomenon in question. As to the difference of weight, *that* may be explained in the same way as the change of weight in inert bodies. The *intrinsic* weight of the young lady's body was not changed, because there was no change in the amount of matter it contained; but her body was, for the time being, brought under the control of an exterior agent that was able to augment or to diminish its *apparent* weight, as we explained above (78 *et seq*). It is therefore probable that, if the transfiguration had caused it to assume the aspect of a little child, the *apparent* weight of the body would have been proportionally diminished.

124. "We can understand," it may be objected, "that a body may be made to assume the appearance of another body of the same dimensions, or even of a larger one; but how could it assume that of a smaller one, that of a little child, as has just been suggested? In such a case, would not the real body exceed the limits of the apparent body?" We reply that, the portion of the real body which, in such a case, would be in excess of the apparent body might easily be rendered invisible by spirit-action. But we do not assert that this phenomenon has actually been produced we only desire to show, theoretically, that both the size and the weight of the body *might* be made to undergo an *apparent* diminution. As to the phenomenon itself, we neither affirm nor deny its possibility; but, should it occur, and, should no more satisfactory solution have been arrived at, our theory would show how it *might* have been produced. We must never forget that we are on the threshold of the subject, and that we have still as much to learn in regard to the laws of spirit-manifestation as of all others.

125. We might here touch on the singular phenomenon of the *agénères* or ingenerated, *which*, however extraordinary it may appear, is no more supernatural than the other phenomena we have been considering. But having fully explained this subject in the *Revue Spirite* of February 1859, we think it unnecessary to reproduce that explanation here. We will merely add that it is a variety of the class of tangible apparitions; a peculiar state of certain spirits, enabling them to clothe themselves, temporarily, with a form so exactly resembling a body of flesh as to appear to be such to those about them.

CHAPTER 8

Laboratory of the Invisible World

Spirit clothing – Spontaneous formation of tangible objects – Modification of the properties of matter – Curative action of animal magnetism.

126. We have already said that spirits sometimes appear in flowing draperies, sometimes in ordinary human clothes. The former appear to be the general costume of the spirit world; but, it will naturally be asked, where do spirits get their clothing, clothing which is often precisely like what they wore on earth, and comprising all the ordinary accessories of the toilet? It is certain that, in dying, they did not carry those objects away with them; yet we see them before us, and can touch them with our hands where do they come?

This problem has always been a puzzling one for observers. With many, it is simply a matter of curiosity, but it really involves a point of great importance; our search after its solution has set us on the track of a general law which is equally applicable to the spirit-world and to our corporeal world, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to explain the complicated phenomena referred to.

In the case of a spirit who appears with the clothing he wore during life, we might explain the appearance as the result of an action of the spirit's memory, and as forming, so to say, a part of his individuality; but this could hardly be supposed to be the case as regards accessories, such, for instance, as the snuff box of the old gentleman who visited the sick lady, as related above (127). And it is, moreover, to be remarked that, in the case alluded to, the apparition was not that of a *dead* person, but of a *living* one; and that this same old gentleman, when he afterwards visited the lady in his material body, brought with him a snuff box similar, in every respect, to that which had been used by his spirit. Where did his spirit find the snuff box that was in his hand when he sat at the foot of the lady's bed? A question that might be repeated in regard to a great number of cases which we could instance, in which the spirits of deceased as well as of living people have appeared, carrying in their hands various objects, such as sticks, pipes, lanterns, books etc.

It formerly occurred to us that inert bodies might possibly have their etherealized correspondents in the invisible world, and that the condensed matter which forms the objects of our world might have, in the spirit-world, a corresponding *quintessence* which our bodily senses are unable to perceive. This hypothesis was not devoid of probability, but it failed to account for all the facts that presented themselves, and of which one, especially, seemed to defy all our attempts at interpretation. Up to that time, there had occurred, in our experience, only instances of images or appearances; and although we had seen that the perispirit could acquire the

properties of matter, and could become tangible, yet this tangibility had been only momentary, and the seemingly solid body thus produced had vanished like a shadow. That phenomenon was sufficiently extraordinary; but what was still more so was to see *persistently solid matter* produced by spirits, as has been done in a number of perfectly authentic cases, and, among others, in the phenomenon to which we have just referred, *viz.*, that of *direct writing*. We shall treat of that phenomenon in a special chapter; but as it is intimately connected with the point we are now considering, we will, before proceeding farther, offer a few remarks in regard to it.

127. Direct writing, or *pneumatography*, is that which is produced spontaneously, that is to say, without the help of the medium's hand, or a pencil. It is enough to provide a clean sheet of paper (which can be done with all due precautions, so as to assure ourselves that we have not been made the victims of trickery), to fold it up, and to put it into a drawer, or upon a table; after which, if conditions are favorable, we find, and perhaps in a very short time, various signs, letters, and even long communications, traced upon the paper, usually with some black or grey substance having the appearance of lead or crayon, sometimes as though traced with a red pencil, and sometimes, again, as though written with common ink or even with printer's ink. When a pencil is placed with the paper, we may suppose that the spirit has used it for writing; but when the paper only is left, without anything else, it is evident that the writing is done with some sort of material produced by the spirits themselves; but where do the spirits find that material? To this question, the snuffbox mentioned above was the means of procuring for us an answer which appears to us to be conclusive.

128. It was the spirit of Saint Louis who gave us, in reference to this problem, the solution referred to, and which is embodied in the following dialogue:

(1) We have laid before you the case of an apparition of the spirit of a person in the flesh. This spirit carried a snuff box and took snuff; did he feel the sensation which we should feel in this act?

"No."

(2) This snuff box looked exactly like the one which he habitually used; but that real snuff box was in his house. What was the snuff box seen in his hand?

"An appearance; it was made to occur, in order both that the circumstance might be remarked, as, in fact, was the case, and also that the apparition might not be taken for an hallucination produced by the ill-health of the seer. The spirit desired that the lady should be convinced of the reality of his presence; he therefore assumed all the appearances of reality."

(3) You say it was an *appearance*; but there is nothing real in an *appearance*, which is a sort of optical illusion.

What we want to know is whether this snuff box was only an image without reality, or whether there was not something of materiality in its nature?

“Certainly there was something material in its nature; it is by the aid of this materiality that the perispirit takes on the appearance of clothes like those which the spirit wore while on earth.”

Remark – It is evident that we must here understand the word “appearance” in the sense of *aspect*, or *imitation*. The snuff box in its reality was not there; what the spirit held in his hand was only its representative; it was therefore an *appearance* as compared with the original, although formed of a sort of matter.

Experience teaches us not to take every expression given by spirits too literally. By interpreting their expressions according to our own ideas, we run the risk of falling into serious errors; and we should therefore endeavor to ascertain *the real meaning* of their words, whenever these present the least ambiguity, as the spirits themselves constantly recommend us to do. For instance, without the explanation just given, the word *appearance*, frequently recurring in analogous cases, might give rise to false interpretations.

(4) Can it be that inert matter has its “double?” Can it be that, in the invisible world, there is an *essential matter* which assumes the forms of the objects of our world? In other words, have the objects of the terrestrial world their *ethereal counterparts* in the invisible world, as spirits are the counterparts of men?

“That is not the case. A spirit exerts, over the material elements everywhere disseminated through space and in your atmosphere, a power such as you are far from suspecting. He can, by his will, concentrate those elements, and give them the apparent form required for his projects.”

Remark – The foregoing question, as will have been seen, was the translation of our own thought, that is to say, of the idea that we had formed in regard to the nature of those objects. If the answer had been, as some may surmise, the reflection of our own thought, we should have received the confirmation of our own supposition, instead of receiving an explanation altogether contrary to the one which we had imagined.

(5) We repeat our question, categorically, to avoid all ambiguity, and we again ask you:

Are the clothes, worn by spirits, something real?

“It appears to me that my previous answer replies to your question. Do you not know that the perispirit itself is something real?”

(6) Your explanation seems to imply that spirits transform ethereal matter at pleasure, and that, consequently, with regard to the snuff box, for example, the spirit did not find it ready made, but made it himself, at the moment when he wanted it, by an act of his will, and that he was able, afterwards, to unmake it. It must therefore be the same in regard to all other objects seen with spirits, whether clothes, jewels, or what not.

“Evidently so.”

(7) The snuff box in question was visible for the lady, and so plainly as to make her think it real. Could the spirit have made it tangible for her?

“He could have done so.”
(8) Could the lady have taken the box in her hands, and, in that case, would it still have appeared to her to be a real snuff box?
“Yes.”
(9) If she had opened it, she would probably have found snuff there; if she had taken a pinch, would it have made her sneeze?
“Yes.”
(10) A spirit, then, cannot only produce a form, but can give to that form the special properties of the object thus imitated?
“Yes, if he so wills it; it was in virtue of this principle that I gave affirmative replies to your preceding questions. You will have abundant proofs of the powerful action exercised by spirit over matter; proofs such as you little imagine at present, as I have already told you.”
(11) If a spirit had compounded a poisonous substance, and some human being should swallow it, would the latter be poisoned?
“Such a compound could be made; but no spirit could make it, for he would not be permitted to do so.”
(12) Could he fabricate a substance that would be beneficial to health, and capable of curing a malady? Has such a thing ever been done?
“Yes, very often.”
(13) If he could easily fabricate all material substances, suppose he made some fruit, or any other article of food, would it appease a man’s hunger if he ate it?
“Yes, yes; but do not try so hard to find out what it is so easy to understand. A ray of sunlight suffices to enable your gross organs to perceive the material particles which fill the space in the midst of which you live. Do you not know that the air contains the vapor of water? Condense that vapor, and you bring it back to its normal state; deprive it of heat, and the invisible molecules of that vapor have been changed into a solid body; and how many other substances are there, from which chemists will produce marvels even more astonishing? But spirits possess instruments more perfect than yours, *viz.*, their will, and the Divine permission.”
Remark – This question of the appeasing of hunger by substances of the character we are considering is very important. If a substance has only temporary existence and properties, and is, so to say, only a sort of *pretense*, how can it appease the hunger of the material body? This substance, by its contact with the stomach, produces a sensation of satisfaction, but not the satisfaction that results from filling the stomach with natural food. If such a substance can act on the bodily economy so as to modify a morbid state, it can just as well act on the stomach so as to produce the sensation resulting from the satisfaction of appetite. Nevertheless, those whose business it is to provide us with drugs and with dinners need not be jealous of spirit-power, nor imagine that the denizens of the other world are coming into competition with them.

Such cases of spirit-action are rare, exceptional, and independent of the human will; otherwise we should really be fed and cured too cheaply.
(14) Could objects that have been thus formed by spirits, and rendered tangible by their will, obtain the attributes of permanence and stability, and be made use of by men?
“The thing is possible in itself, *but it is never done*; it would be an infringement of the laws of natural order in the sphere of human life.”
(15) Do all spirits possess the power of producing tangible objects in the same degree?
“The higher the spirit, the more easily does he obtain this effect; but it also depends upon circumstances: inferior spirits sometimes have this power.”
(16) Does a spirit always comprehend the way in which he makes his garments and the other objects he shows us?
“No, he often determines their formation by an instinctive act which, if he is not sufficiently enlightened, he does not understand.”
(17) If a spirit can draw from the universal element the materials for making all sorts of things, and if he can give to each of those things a temporary reality and peculiar properties, it is evident that he can draw from this element the matter necessary for writing; and your explanations would therefore appear to give us the key to the phenomenon of direct writing: is it so
“Ah! You’ve found that out, at last, have you?”
Remark – All our preliminary questions had been put with a view to arriving at the solution just given. The spirit’s exclamation proves that he had read our thought.
(18) If the matter employed by the spirit were not permanent, how is it that the traces of direct writing do not disappear?
“Do not strain at words; I did not say that spirit-formations are *never* permanent.
I have been speaking of voluminous objects; but writing consists merely of signs that have been traced, and which it may be useful to preserve; and they are accordingly preserved. I meant to say that the objects thus composed by spirits could not become objects of common use, because there is, in them, no real aggregation of matter such as there is in your solid bodies.”
129. The explanation just given may be thus summed up: Spirit has the power of acting upon matter. Individual spirits draw, from the universal cosmic matter, the elements necessary to form, according to their wishes, objects having the appearance of the various bodies existing on the earth. They can also, by their will, effect the particular transformation of elementary matter which gives to it certain determinate properties. This ability is inherent in the nature of spirits, who often exercise it instinctively, when necessary, without being able to explain how they do it. Objects formed by a spirit have only a temporary existence, subordinate to his will, or to the necessity of the case; he can make and unmake them at pleasure.

These objects may, in certain cases, be made to present to us all the appearances of reality; that is to say, they may become, for the time being visible and tangible. In such action there is *formation*, but not *creation*; for no spirit can evolve something out of nothing.

130. The existence of a unique elementary matter is now generally admitted by science, and is confirmed, as we have seen, by spirits. This matter gives birth to all natural bodies; and by the transformations which it undergoes, it also produces the different properties of those bodies. It is thus that a salutary substance may be rendered poisonous by a simple modification of its molecular arrangement, a fact of which chemistry offers a vast number of examples. As everyone knows, two substances, each of which is in itself innocuous, may produce, when combined in certain proportions, a new substance which is deleterious. One equivalent of oxygen and two equivalents of hydrogen (both, in themselves, inoffensive bodies)combined, become water; add another equivalent of oxygen, and you obtain a corrosive liquid. Moreover, without changing the proportions of chemical equivalents, a mere change in the mode of their molecular aggregation is often sufficient to change the properties of a substance; thus an opaque body may be made transparent, and vice *versa. Since* a spirit possesses, in his will, so powerful an instrument of action upon the elements of matter, it is easy to understand that he may be able, not only to form substances, but also to change the properties of substances; the spirit's will, in such cases, producing the effect of a chemical reagent.

131. This theory explains a fact well known in mesmerism, but hitherto unexplained, *viz.*, that of the changes effected in the properties of water by the action of the will. The acting spirit, in this case, is that of the hypnotist, who is frequently assisted by a disincarnate spirit, and who effects a transformation of the water by means of what, for want of a better term, we call the animalized-magnetic fluid, which, as we have said, is the substance that approaches most nearly to the cosmic matter, or universal element. If the hypnotist can modify the properties of water, he can also effect an analogous modification of the fluids of the human organism; hence the curative effect of the mesmeric action, when properly directed.

We know the important part that is played by the will in the production of all the phenomena of animal magnetism; but how are we to explain the action of so subtle an agent on matter? The will is not a *being*, not a *substance*; it is not even a property of the most etherealized matter. True; but will is the essential attribute of the spirit, that is to say, of the thinking being. With the aid of this instrument, a spirit acts on the elements of matter; and, by the same action, exercised on the elements of the compound bodies formed from that matter, he is able to modify the properties of those bodies.

Will is the attribute of the incarnate spirit, as well as of the disincarnate spirit wandering in space; hence the power of the hypnotist, a power which, as we know, is proportioned to his force of will. The incarnate spirit being

able to act upon elementary matter, he can also vary its properties within certain limits. We are thus enabled to explain the gift of healing hands possessed by many people to a greater or lesser degree.

CHAPTER 9

Haunted Places

132. The spontaneous manifestations which have occurred in all times, and the persistence of some spirits in giving ostensible evidence of their presence in certain localities, are the source of the belief in haunted places. The following spirit-answers were elicited by our questions on this subject.

(1) Do spirits attach themselves to people only, or do they also attach themselves to things?

"That depends upon their elevation. Certain spirits may attach themselves to terrestrial objects; misers, for instance, who have hidden their hoards, and who are not sufficiently dematerialized, may still watch over and guard them."

(2) Are there any places for which errant spirits have a predilection?

"Spirits who are no longer earthbound go where they find those whom they love, for they are attracted rather by people than by material things. Some of them may, for a time, retain a preference for certain places; but those who do so are spirits of inferior advancement."

(3) Since the attachment of spirits for localities is a sign of inferiority, is it also a proof that they are evil spirits?

"Assuredly not; a spirit may be but little advanced, and yet not be a bad spirit; is it not so among men?"

(4) Is there any foundation for the belief that spirits frequent ruins by preference?

"No; spirits go to such places, just as they go everywhere else; but the lugubrious aspect of certain places strikes the human imagination, and leads you to attribute, to the presence of spirits, what is often merely a natural effect. How often does fear turn the shadow of a tree into a phantom, or mistake the cry of an animal, or the murmuring of the wind, for the wail of a ghost! Spirits like the presence of men, and usually seek out inhabited places rather than solitary ones."

– Nevertheless, knowing what we do of the diversity of character among spirits, may we not suppose that there are misanthropes among them, preferring solitude to society?

"Have I not already answered you on this point, by saying that spirits may seek out desolate places, as well as all other places? If some of them live alone, they do so because it pleases them, but this is no reason why spirits should necessarily prefer ruins; and, assuredly, there are many more spirits in cities and inhabited dwellings than in solitary places."

(5) Popular beliefs have generally a foundation of truth; what is the origin of the belief in haunted places?

"It has grown out of men's instinctive belief in spirit manifestations, a belief that has prevailed in all ages of the world; but, as I said just now, the aspect of lugubrious places strikes the imagination, and men have naturally

located, in such places, the beings whom they have regarded as supernatural. This superstitious belief is upheld by the fanciful imaginings of your poets, as well as by the nonsensical stories told to you in the nursery."

(6) Spirits who assemble together, have they any preferences in regard to days and hours of meeting?

"No; days and hours are measurements of time for the use of men, and for the needs of corporeal life; spirits have no need of any such measurements, and take very little heed of them."

(7) What is the origin of the idea that spirits prefer to come at night?

"The impression produced on the imagination by darkness and silence. All such ideas are superstitions that a rational knowledge of spiritism will destroy. It is the same with respect to the notion, held by some people, that certain days and hours are more propitious than others; the influence of midnight has no existence except in storybooks."

– If this is the case, how is it that many spirits announce their arrival and manifestations for midnight, or for certain predetermined days, as Fridays, for example?

"Such spirits only trifle with your credulity. In the same way, there are spirits who declare themselves to be the devil, or give themselves some other diabolical or fantastic name. Show them that you are not to be taken in by them, and you will hear no more of such absurdities."

(8) Do spirits come back by preference to the burial place of their body?

"The body was but a garment; they care no more for their fleshly envelope, in which they have had to suffer, than the prisoner cares for his chains. The memory of those they love is the only thing they value."

– Are prayers offered up at their graves especially pleasing to them, and do they attract them more than prayers would do elsewhere?

"Prayer is an evocation which attracts a spirit, as you know. The more fervent and sincere the prayer, the greater the effect it produces; and therefore, the sight of a venerated tomb may serve to concentrate the thought of him who prays, while the interest attached to it, as to any other treasured relic, being a testimony of affection offered to the spirit, he is always attracted and touched thereby. But, in all such cases, it is the *thought* which acts on a spirit, and not any material objects; for *these* have less influence on the spirit who is prayed for than on the person who prays, and whose attention they serve to concentrate and intensify."

(9) That being the case, the belief in haunted places would appear to be not absolutely groundless?

"We have told you that there are spirits who are attracted by material things; such spirits may also be attracted to certain places, and may even take up their abode in them, until the cessation of the circumstances that have attracted them thither."

– What are the circumstances that may attract spirits to a given place?

“Their sympathy with people who frequent that place, and, in some cases, the desire to communicate with them. Their motives, however, are not always so praiseworthy inferior spirits may desire to revenge themselves on people against whom they have a grudge. Sojourn in a fixed locality may be, also, a punishment inflicted on them especially if they have committed a crime there, so that the crime may be constantly before their eyes.”

(10) Have haunted places, in all cases, been the former habitation of the spirits who haunt them?

“Not in all cases; if the former inhabitant be an elevated spirit, he will no more hold to his old house than to his old body. Spirits who haunt certain localities, when not attracted to them by sympathy for certain people, are often only actuated by caprice.”

– Can they attach themselves to certain places, in order to act as protectors of particular people of families?

“Assuredly, if they are good spirits; but, in that case, they never manifest their presence by disagreeable actions”

(11) Is there any truth in the legend of “The White Lady.”

“It is as true as are a thousand other facts of a similar nature.”

(12) Is it rational to dread places that are reputed to be haunted by spirits?

“No; the spirits who haunt certain places, and make disturbances there, do so to amuse themselves at the expense of the credulous and the cowardly, rather than for any evil purpose. Besides, you must not forget that there are spirits everywhere; and that, wherever you may be, you have them incessantly around you, even in the quietest houses. They only appear to haunt certain habitations because they find, in them, the conditions necessary for manifesting their presence.”

(13) Is there any method of expelling them?

“Yes; but most frequently what people do for that purpose attracts rather than repels them. The best way of expelling bad spirits is to attract good ones, by doing all the good you can; the bad ones will then go away, for good and evil are incompatible.

Be always good, and you will have only good spirits about you.”

– Many very good people, however, are greatly annoyed by the persecutions of bad spirits.

“If people thus annoyed are really good, the annoyance may be a trial to exercise their patience, and to excite them to greater goodness.”

(14) Can evil spirits be driven from haunted places by exorcisms?

“Have you often seen exorcisms successful? Have you not, on the contrary, often found that they increased the disturbances? Mischievous spirits are often amused at being mistaken for the devil.

“Spirits who come without any evil intention may also manifest their presence by rendering themselves visible, or by noises; but the noises they make never degenerate into racket. They are often suffering spirits whom you may relieve by praying for them; they are sometimes kindly spirits, who desire to show you that they are near you; or they may be frivolous spirits,

who are only in sport. Since these who disturb you are, almost invariably, spirits in search of amusement, the best thing to do is to laugh at them they will tire of playing pranks, if they see that they neither frighten nor vex you."

From these explanations, we learn that there are spirits who attach themselves to localities, and remain in them by preference, without having any motive for manifesting their presence to us. Any place may be the sojourn of a spirit, either from a preference on his part, or from its having been assigned to him as a temporary abode, without his ever producing a manifestation of any kind; and this, even in the case of those who have led an evil life.

The spirits who attach themselves to localities, or to material things, are never of superior advancement; but although not of high degree, they are not necessarily wicked, nor animated by hostile intentions. Such inmates are sometimes even useful; for, when they take an interest in the people of the house, they often render them various services.

CHAPTER 10

Nature of Spirit Communications

Coarse – frivolous – Serious – Instructive communications.

133. We have shown that every effect, implying, as its cause, an act of free will, however insignificant, proves thereby the action of an intelligent cause; and that, therefore, the mere movement of a table, if it answers our thoughts, or gives proof of intention, must be regarded as an intelligent manifestation. If all manifestations were confined within such limits, the subject would have but little interest for us; because, although it would still be something to be assured that the phenomena in question are not merely physical, they would be of little practical value. But it is quite otherwise when the manifestation of intelligence acquires a development which permits of a regular and consecutive exchange of thoughts; for in such cases, the phenomena elicited can no longer be regarded merely as *intelligent manifestations*, but assume the far more important character of *communications*. The means now at our disposal permit of our obtaining, from spirits, communications as extensive, explicit, and rapid, as those which we can obtain from men.

If we bear in mind the infinite variety that exists among spirits, under the double aspect of intelligence and of morality (See *The Spirits' Book*, No. 100), we perceive that a corresponding diversity must exist in their communications, which necessarily reflect the elevation or the backwardness of the spirits by whom they are made; and that the quality of their ideas, their degree of knowledge or of ignorance, their virtues and their vices, will be evidenced by the communications which emanate from them, and which will no more resemble each other than do, among men, those of the savage and the most enlightened European. But all the shades presented by spirit-communications may be grouped into four principal categories; according to their most salient characteristics, they may be designated as *coarse*, *frivolous*, *serious*, and *instructive*.

134. *Coarse communications* are those which shock propriety. They can only proceed from spirits at a very low stage of development, still soiled with the impurities of materiality. They are in no way different from the utterances of coarse and vicious men, and are revolting to everyone who has the least delicacy of sentiment; being trivial, obscene, insolent, arrogant, malevolent, or even impious, according to the character of the spirits who make them.

135. *Frivolous communications* emanate from spirits who are frivolous, mischievous, and tricky, rather than wicked, and who attach no importance to what they say. As there is nothing unseemly in their communications, they amuse people who take pleasure in futile talk. Such spirits, however, sometimes come down upon their interlocutors with clever, biting sallies throwing on, in the midst of commonplace jokes, hard truths that often hit

the mark. These frivolous spirits are around us in swarms, and take every opportunity of mixing themselves up with the communications of other spirits. Having no respect for veracity, they take a mischievous pleasure in tricking those who have the weakness or presumption to believe them. Those who amuse themselves with such communications naturally give access to foolish and deceptive spirits; while, at the same time, they repel serious ones, who, like serious men, avoid the society of the unreasoning and the giddy.

136. *Serious communications* are distinguished by the gravity of the subjects of which they treat, and by the seriousness of their tone. Every communication exempt from coarseness and frivolity, and having in view a useful object, even though it is one of merely private interest, may be classed as “serious” but, nevertheless, it may not be exempt from error. Serious spirits are not all equally enlightened; there are many things of which they are ignorant, and concerning which they may be mistaken. For this reason, spirits who are really superior constantly advise us to submit all communications to the test of examination and of reason.

It is therefore imperatively necessary to distinguish between communications that are *seriously true* and communications that are *seriously false*. But this is not always easy; for it is often under the guise of seriousness that presumptuous and superficial spirits seek to foist upon us their erroneous ideas and absurd theories, unscrupulously assuming the most honored and even the most venerated names, in order the more effectually to impose upon us; a method of deception which constitutes one of the most dangerous stumbling-blocks of practical spiritism. We shall return to this subject, of which we shall treat, farther on, with all the minuteness that its importance demands; we shall then point out the means of guarding ourselves against false communications.

137. *Instructive communications* are those which are not only serious, but also convey the teachings of superior spirits on points of science, morality, philosophy, etc.

They are more or less profound, in proportion to the elevation and dematerialization of the communicating spirit. In order to reap benefit from such communications, they must be followed up with regularity and perseverance. Serious spirits attach themselves to those who desire instruction, and assist them; but those who only see in these manifestations a source of passing amusement are left by them to the companionship of spirits as frivolous as themselves. It is only by the regularity and frequency of such communications that we can appreciate the moral and intellectual worth of the spirits with whom we thus hold converse, and the degree of confidence which they deserve. If experience is necessary in order to form a true estimate of men, it is, if possible, still more necessary in forming a true estimate of spirits.

In applying to these communications the qualification of *instructive*, we imply that they are true; for what is not true can never be *instructive*,

though expressed in the most imposing language. We therefore do not include in this category certain teachings which have nothing serious about them but their high-flown and pretentious style, by which spirits possessed of more presumption than philosophy endeavor to mislead.

But such spirits, being unable to disguise their shallowness, are incapable of keeping up their false assumptions for any length of time; they soon betray their weak side, if we continue to converse with them, and ply them with questions which compel them to show their incompetency.

138. The means of communicating with spirits are numerous and varied. As spirits act on all our organs and on all our senses, they are able to manifest themselves, to the sight, by apparitions; to the touch, by impressions, occult or visible, on our bodily frame; to the hearing, by sounds; and to the sense of smell, by odors coming from we know not where. This last mode of manifestation, although real, is, undoubtedly, the most uncertain of all, owing to the various sources of error with which it is environed; and we will therefore not pause to examine it more fully, but proceed at once to consider the principal means of obtaining communications, in other words, *of establishing a regular and consecutive exchange of ideas* with spirits. The means of doing this are, 1. Raps and Tilting, 2. Speech, and 3. Writing. We will examine each of these in a special chapter.

CHAPTER 11

Sematology and Typtology

The language of signs – Raps and tilting – Alphabetical typtology.

139. The first intelligent manifestations were obtained by raps and tilting, or
Typtology. This primitive method, indicative of the infancy of the art of communication, was of very narrow application, and those who employed it were restricted, in their communications, to monosyllabically replies, to a mere “yes” or “no,” signified by the number of raps previously agreed upon, as the representation of those words. As already observed, this method was subsequently improved upon. Answers were obtained in two ways, with the aid of mediums possessing the aptitude required for physical manifestations; *viz.*, by the movement of a table, and by raps which seem to be produced in the substance of the wood, in the walls, or in the air. The first of these consists in the movement of the table, which tilts itself up on one side, and then falls back, striking the floor with its foot. To obtain this effect, the medium has only to place his hands on the edge of the table but, if he desires to communicate with a particular spirit, he must evoke him, as otherwise he will have the first comer who happens to present himself, or the spirit who is in the habit of coming. It having been agreed, for example, that one tilt shall mean “no” and three tilts “yes” (or any other numbers, this being indifferent),the spirit is asked the desired questions (we shall hereafter allude to the questions which it is wise to abstain from asking). The inconvenience of typtology consists in the brevity of the answers obtained, and the difficulty of forming the questions in such a way as to be answerable by “yes” or “no.” Supposing we asked the spirit: What do you want? He could only answer us by an entire sentence. It is therefore necessary to say: Do you desire such and such a thing? – “No.” Do you desire some other thing? – “Yes.” And so on.

140. We would remark that, in the employment of this method of communication, the spirit frequently has recourse to a sort of mimicry; that is to say, he expresses the energy of affirmation or negation by the force and character of the tilts or raps. He often expresses, in the same way, the nature of the sentiments which animate him: violence, by abruptness of movement; anger and impatience, by striking hard and repeated blows, like someone who stamps angrily on the ground; occasionally he upsets the table. A polite and kindly spirit, at the beginning and the end of a *séance*, moves the table as though making a bow; if desirous of addressing himself directly to one of the people present, he pushes the table towards him, gently or roughly, according to the sentiment by which he is animated. This is, properly speaking, *sematology*, or the *language of signs*, as *typtology* is the *language of raps*. Here is a remarkable example of spontaneous sematology:

A gentleman of our acquaintance, being one day in his drawing room, where several people were holding a *séance*, received a letter from us. While he was reading it, the little table, used by him for spiritist experimentation, suddenly moved up to him.

Having finished reading our letter, he went towards another table at the farther end of the room, and laid the letter upon it. The little table followed him, and went up to the table upon which he had laid the letter. Surprised at this occurrence, our friend bethought him that there must be some connection between the movements of the little table and the letter; he inquired the name of the spirit who had moved the table, and a name was given which is that of our familiar spirit. The gentleman having informed us of this circumstance, we, in our turn, begged the spirit to tell us the motive of the visit he had made to our friend; whereupon, this reply was given – "It is natural that I should go and see those with whom you are in communication, in order that I may, if necessary, give to them, as well as to you, such advice as may be useful."

It is evident that the spirit wished to attract the attention of the gentleman in question, and sought for some means of manifesting his presence. A dumb man would hardly have managed better.

141. Typtology was speedily improved by the adoption of a more extended method of communication, which we may designate as *alphabetical typtology*. This consists in designating the letters of the alphabet by tilts; words, sentences, and even long communications are thus obtained. According to one method, the table makes as many tilts as are needed to indicate each letter; that is to say, one tilt for *a*, two for b, and so on; meanwhile, someone of the party writes down each letter as indicated by the number of tilts. When the spirit has finished, he makes some sign, previously agreed upon, to indicate the fact.

This mode of proceeding, as will be readily understood, is extremely tedious, and requires an enormous amount of time for obtaining communications of any length; but practice soon suggested various abbreviated methods more rapid than the above.

That which is generally employed, consists in having the letters of the alphabet, and the numerals, written on a sheet of paper or cardboard. The medium being seated at the table, some member of the circle runs a pencil or other pointer along the letters, when words are wanted; along the ciphers, when numbers are wanted. When the pencil reaches the desired letter or cipher, the table gives a tilt, and the letter or cipher thus indicated is written down; the person who holds the pencil going through the same operation for the next letter, and so on. If a mistake occurs in regard to a letter, the spirit gives notice of the fact by several tilts; and the pencil is again taken through the alphabet. In this way, by dint of practice, it is possible to get on with tolerable quickness.

142. The other application of typtology is by raps produced in the wood of the table, without any movement occurring in the latter; and all that we

have just described, in reference to the tilting of the table, is equally applicable to the obtaining of communications by raps. All mediums are not equally successful in obtaining both kinds of typtology, for some can only obtain tilts, while others can only obtain raps.

Most mediums, however, by perseverance, can eventually succeed in obtaining raps, which have the double advantage of being not only more rapid, but also less open to suspicion, than the tilting, which may be attributed to voluntary or involuntary pressure. It is true that the raps also can be imitated by untruthful mediums, for the best things may be counterfeited, a fact which proves nothing against their reality.

But however improved, this way of proceeding can never attain the ease and rapidity of writing; and, consequently, the old methods of tilting and rapping are now less frequently employed. The old way is nevertheless very interesting as a phenomenon, especially for beginners; and it has the special advantage of being independent of the medium's mind. By the old method, too, answers are often obtained, so unexpected, so apt and pertinent, that one must be prejudiced indeed to reject the evidence thus afforded, and which is often an effectual means of conviction. But neither by this method, nor by any other, can spirits be made to yield to the caprices of mere curiosity, or forced to answer misplaced or indiscreet questions.

143. In order to render spirit-communications independent of the medium's mind, various instruments have been devised. One of these is a sort of dial-plate, on which the letters of the alphabet are ranged like those on the dial of the electric telegraph; a moveable needle, set in motion through the medium's influence, with the aid of a conducting thread and pulley, points out the letters. We cannot help thinking, however, that independence of the medium's thought is insured as well by the raps, and that this independence is proved more conclusively by the unexpectedness and pertinence of the answers, than by all the mechanical contrivances yet invented for this purpose. Moreover, the skeptic, always on the lookout for wires and machinery, are more inclined to suspect deception in connection with any special mechanical arrangements than with a bare table, devoid of all accessories.

144. A more simple contrivance, but one open to abuse, as we shall see in the chapter on *Frauds*, is the one devised by Madame Émile de Girardin, and by which she obtained numerous and interesting communications; for that lady, accomplished and clever as she was, had the weakness to believe in spirits and their manifestations. The instrument alluded to, consists of a little table with a moveable top, eighteen inches in diameter, turning freely on an axle, like a wheel. On its edge are traced, as upon a dial plate, the letters of the alphabet, the numerals, and the words "*yes*" and "*no*." In the centre is a fixed needle. The medium places his fingers on this table, which turns and stops when the desired letter is brought under the needle. The letters thus indicated being written down one after the other words and phrases are obtained, often with great rapidity.

It is to be remarked that the top of the little table does not turn round under the fingers, but that the fingers remain in their place and follow the movement of the table.

A powerful medium might probably obtain an independent movement; in which case the experiment would be more conclusive, because less open to the possibility of trickery.

145. Let us here correct the wide spread error which confounds all spirits who communicate by tilts or raps with “rapping-spirits”. Typtology is a means of communication like any other; and is no more unworthy of elevated spirits than writing or speaking. All spirits, good or bad, may employ this method as well as any other.

What characterizes superior spirits is the elevation of their thought, and not the instrument they may use for its transmission; they no doubt prefer the more convenient and rapid methods, but, in the absence of these, they willingly employ the table, as is shown by the fact that some of the grandest communications yet received have been made in this way. If we do not usually employ the table, it is not because we despise it, but merely because, as a phenomenon, it has given us all that it was capable of giving, so that it can add nothing to our convictions, while the length of the communications we receive has compelled us to have recourse to more expeditious methods.

All spirits who rap are not, then, what are commonly called “rapping-spirits;” which designation should be reserved for those who may be styled *professional rappers*, and who take pleasure in going their rounds, amusing some, and boring others.

Smart things are sometimes said by them, but never anything really profound. It would be a loss of time to ask scientific or philosophical questions of ignorant pretenders, who are classed by higher spirits as the quacks and mountebanks of the spirit-world. They are, nevertheless, often employed by superior spirits as their instruments for the production of physical manifestations.

CHAPTER 12

Pneumatography or Direct Writing – Pneumatophony or Direct Spirit-Sounds

Direct Writing.

146. *Pneumatography* is writing produced directly by a spirit, without any intermediary; it differs from *psychography* which is the transmission of a spirit's thought by the writing of the medium's hand.

Wonderful as is the phenomenon of direct writing, it is, nevertheless, a fully proved and incontestable fact. If the theoretic teachings of spiritism are required to enable us to account for the occurrence of spirit-phenomena in general, they are even more necessary in regard to this particular phenomenon, which may well appear "supernatural" to those who are unacquainted with those teachings, but which, with their aid, are easily explicable.

When this phenomenon was first observed, the predominant feeling in regard to it was that of suspicion; the idea of trickery with the aid of certain inks which, at first invisible, become subsequently visible, was in everybody's thoughts. We cannot affirm that such deception has never been practiced; on the contrary, we are convinced that some people, from mercenary motives, and others from vanity and to acquire the reputation of being powerful mediums, have, in too many instances, employed deceptions of various kinds. (See the chapter on *Frauds*)

But it would be absurd to conclude that, because a phenomenon can be imitated, the phenomenon itself does not occur. Has not ingenuity succeeded in imitating the lucidity of a sleepwalker, and so cleverly as to make deception appear a reality? And because this feat of charlatanism has had a run at fairs, are we therefore to conclude that there are no real sleepwalkers? Because some dealers sell adulterated wine, are we to assert that no pure wine is to be had? It is the same with direct writing the precautions for making sure of the reality of the fact are simple and easy; and, thanks to the employment or those precautions, the reality of this phenomenon is no longer a matter of doubt.

147. The possibility of writing without any human intermediary being now proved to be one of the attributes of a spirit, and spirits having always existed and having always produced the various phenomena with which we are now acquainted, it follows that they must have produced direct writing in ancient times, as well as at the present day; and we are thus enabled to explain the apparition of the four words on the wall of Belshazzar's palace.

The Middle Ages, so fertile in occult prodigies which it sought to smother in the ashes of the stake, must also have witnessed the phenomenon of direct writing; and it was probably from knowledge of the modifications which spirits can effect in matter, that the alchemists derived their belief in the

transmutation of metals. (Chap. VIII) But whatever partial knowledge of spirit-action may have been arrived at in the past, it is only in these latter days, and since the generalization of the order of facts we are considering, that direct spirit writing has attracted serious attention. The subject was first brought forward in Europe by Baron Guldenstubbe, in his very interesting work on this subject, containing a great number of *facsimiles* of direct spirit writing obtained by him. The phenomenon in question, however, had been known in
America some time before; and has since occurred through several other mediums.

148. Direct writing is often obtained, like most of the other non-spontaneous manifestations, through meditation, prayer, and evocation, and has been often produced in churches, on tombs, and at the foot of the statues or images of the personages evoked; but it is evident that observances and localities have no other influence than that of inducing deeper feeling and a more intense concentration of thought on the part of the medium and those about him, for experience has shown that it may be obtained equally well under other circumstances, and in other places, and even on an ordinary table, when sought for by those who combine the requisite moral conditions with the special psychic ability required for the production of the phenomenon.

It was at first supposed to be necessary, in order to obtain direct spirit-writing, to place a pencil with the paper on which the spirit was to write; and as it is known that spirits can move, displace, and take hold of objects, it was inferred that they employed the pencil in producing the writing. But the presence of a pencil was soon found to be unnecessary; a blank sheet of paper – whether folded or not is immaterial – has often been found to contain writing executed, in the course of a few minutes or moments, upon its surface. By the abstraction of the pencil, the character of the resulting manifestation is radically changed, and we are introduced to an entirely new order of phenomena; for the words thus produced are written with some sort of sub stance, and this substance, if not provided by us for the spirit, must necessarily be a product of his own, something which he has himself composed or brought. If so, what is it, and where did he get it?

Such is the problem of which we have now to indicate the solution.

If the reader will refer to the explanations give in our eighth chapter (127 and 128), he will find this phenomenon fully explained. With the aid of the principles therein laid down, we see that a spirit, in producing direct writing, does not use either our substances or our implements, but fabricates for himself the substance and the implements which he needs; drawing his materials from the primitive universal element and causing them, by his will, to undergo the necessary modifications for the production of the desired effect. He can therefore fabricate crayons of various colors, printing ink or common ink, or even typographic characters, sufficiently firm in texture to give relief to his imitation of printing; examples of all of

which operations have been seen by us. The daughter of a friend of ours, a child of only thirteen years of age, has frequently obtained entire pages of direct writing, produced with a substance resembling pastel.

149. Such is the result to which we have been led by the study of the phenomenon of the snuff box (116), to which we devoted much time and patience, because we saw that it offered the opportunity of ascertaining one of the fundamental laws of spirit-life, the knowledge of which would also elucidate more than one of the mysteries of the visible world. It is thus that light may be obtained from a careful examination of the simplest facts, provided that we do not confine ourselves to looking merely for *effects*, without seeking for their *causes*. If our conviction of the reality of the modern manifestations grows stronger day by day, it is because *we understand what we believe*; and if we desire to convince others of their reality, we must present the subject to them in such a way as that they, too, may *understand* it.

As for the value of the direct writing, we must admit that its chief utility has hitherto been the additional proof thus afforded of the intervention of an occult power in the production of phenomena appreciable by our senses, power which has found, in this species of writing, a new method of manifesting itself. Direct writing has been obtained in various ancient and modern languages, in hieroglyphics, etc.; but the messages thus given have usually been short, this method of communication not having as yet acquired the continuity and rapidity of psychography or writing by the hand of the medium.

150. Spirits produce not only noises and rapping, but cries of every kind, and vocal sounds imitating the human voice, in rooms, and in the open air; phenomena which we designate as *pneumatophony*, or spirit-sounds. Our experience of the nature of spirits has led us to think that some of them, of an inferior order, delude themselves into the belief that they are talking, as when in the flesh.

We must be careful not to take all sounds, the cause of which we know not, or mere tingling of the ears, for occult voices, any more than to share the silly fancy that, when our ears tingle, someone is talking about us. Those tingling feelings, which have a purely physiological cause, and are without meaning, while pneumatophonic sounds express *thoughts*, and thereby prove themselves to be due to an intelligent cause, and not to accident. We may lay it down as a rule that *spirit-intervention is only proved by intelligent manifestations*, in all other cases, there are a hundred chances to one that what are taken for such are really due to fortuitous causes.

151. It often happens that, when we are asleep, we hear words, names, sometimes entire phrases, pronounced with sufficient force and distinctness to waken ‘15 with a start. Although, in some cases, this may be a spirit-manifestation, it is often attributable to the cause of which we treated in our remarks on hallucination (Chap. VI. III, et *seq*) What is thus heard has usually no coherence, thus differing widely from spirit-utterances, heard

when we are awake; for in such cases, we can usually exchange thoughts with the speaker and enter into regular conversation with him.

There are two very distinct ways in which spirit-sounds are perceived; they are sometimes heard by a sort of *interior* hearing, in which case, although the words heard are clear and distinct, they are not of a physical nature; at other times, these voices are perceived as something *exterior* to ourselves, and appear to be as distinctly articulated as though spoken by a person at our side.

However produced, the phenomenon of pneumatophony is almost always spontaneous, and can rarely be obtained by evocation.

CHAPTER 13

Psychography

Indirect Psychography – Planchettes, etc. – Direct or Manual Psychography.

152. The development of the spiritist movement has been unusually rapid; for although we are separated only by a few years from its primitive manifestations, so often contemptuously alluded to as “table-turning,” we are already enabled to converse with spirits as easily and rapidly as men converse with each other, and by the very same means, *viz.*, by speech and by writing. Writing has the special advantage of furnishing a permanent evidence of the action of occult power, one that we are able to preserve as we preserve letters received from correspondents in the flesh. As previously remarked, the first method employed was the use of small baskets and planchettes with a pencil attached to them; which method of correspondence we will now briefly describe.

153. We have said that people endowed with a special aptitude can produce a rotating movement of a table, or other object. Let us suppose, in lieu of a table, that we employ the small basket or planchette alluded to in the beginning of the present work, with a pencil firmly fixed thereto, in such a manner as that the pencil will write upon a sheet of paper placed beneath it, if the basket or planchette be made to move; the pencil tracing scrawls and unmeaning marks, making attempts at writing, or writing legible and intelligible words. If the spirit evoked is willing to communicate, he will no longer answer by raps, but by written communications.

154. Several other contrivances have been invented, by means of which, communications of many pages may be obtained as rapidly as though written with the hand.

155. The acting intelligence often manifests itself by other signs equally conclusive; as when the pencil, having reached the bottom of the page, makes a spontaneous movement to turn over the leaf, or is moved back, over the same page, or over several pages, to some preceding word or passage, which it then underlines or effaces. Sometimes the pencil points to someone of the Company, to whom a message is especially addressed; sometimes it says “yes,” or “no,” by signs as expressive as our movements of head or hand; sometimes, in expressing anger or impatience, it strikes repeatedly on the table, and often so violently as to break its point.

156. In using these appliances, it is almost always necessary that two people should concur; but it is not necessary that the second person should have psychic ability, his concurrence being only needed to maintain the equilibrium of the instrument and to lessen the medium’s fatigue.

157. We may designate writing thus obtained as *indirect psychography*, in contradistinction to *direct* or *manual psychography*, obtained by the hand of the medium himself. In the last-named operation, the communicating spirit

acts directly upon the medium; the medium, under this influence, holds the pencil, as though about to write, when his hand will be made to write, and often without his knowing what he is writing.

In all cases of spirit writing, *it is not that the planchette or the pencil becomes intelligent*; for they are merely *the instruments of an intelligence*. Whatever the instrument employed, it is only a *pencil-holder*; an intermediary between the hand and the pencil. Suppress the intermediary, put the pencil into the medium's hand, and you will have the same result, but much more simply obtained, since the medium will now write as he does in his normal state; thus, everyone who writes with a planchette, or other instrument, can obtain direct writing. Of all means of communication, *writing with the hand*, sometimes designated as *involuntary writing*, is the simplest, easiest, and most convenient, because it requires no preparation, and is as available as common writing. We shall return to this subject when we treat of mediums.

158. When spirit-manifestations first became known, and while ideas were vague and confused with regard to them, several works were published under the title of *Communications of a Basket*, *of a Planchette*, *of a Table*, *etc*. We now understand how erroneous were such titles, and how trivial those communications were; for tables, planchettes, etc., are nothing but instruments *without intelligence*, although vitalized for the moment with an artificial life; instruments utterly unable to communicate anything of themselves. The writers mistook the effect for the cause, the instrument for the agent; an author might just as well state on his title page that his book was written *by* a steel pen or by a goose quill. These instruments, moreover, are not the only ones that can be used; we know a medium, who, instead of the basket or the planchette, used a funnel, in the gullet of which he placed his pencil. Communications, then, can be given through a funnel; we might also get them through a saucepan, or a salad-drainer. If manifestations come by rapping, and this rapping is made by a chair or a walking stick, it is no longer a question of talking tables, but of talking chairs and talking sticks. What we really want to know, is, not the nature of the instrument employed, but the mode of obtaining communications.

If a communication comes by writing, so that all we want is a pencil, we call it *psychography*; if it comes by raps, we call it *psychography*. Spiritism being destined to attain the certainty of a science requires specific terms for the various orders of phenomena with which it deals.

CHAPTER 14

Mediums

Physical Mediums – Sensitive or Impressionable Mediums – Clairaudient Mediums – Trance Mediums – Clairvoyant Mediums – Sleepwalking Mediums – Healing Mediums – Automatic Writing.

159. Everyone who is in any degree influenced by spirits is, by that very fact, a medium. This ability is inherent in man, and is therefore no exclusive privilege; in fact, there are few people in whom some rudiments of mediumship are not found. We may therefore assume that everyone, or nearly everyone, is a medium. Nevertheless, this qualification is only practically applicable to those in whom psychic ability is clearly characterized, producing well-marked results and this depends upon the greater or less degree of sensitivity of the organization. This ability does not reveal itself in all cases in the same manner: each medium has generally a special aptitude for some special order of phenomena, so that there is as great a variety of mediums as of phenomena. The principal varieties of mediums are as follows: *Physical mediums*; *Sensitive* or *Impressionable mediums*; *Clairaudient mediums*; *Trance mediums*; *Clairvoyant mediums*; *Sleepwalkers*; *Healing mediums*; *Automatic Writing*; *Writing mediums*, or *Psychographers*.

1. Physical Mediums

160. *Physical mediums* are more especially fitted for producing physical phenomena, such as the movement of inert bodies, noises, etc. They may be divided into two categories, *Voluntary mediums*, and *Natural* or *Involuntary mediums*.

Voluntary mediums are those who exert their power consciously, and obtain spirit-phenomena by an act of their will. This ability, although inherent, as we have already said, in the human species, is far from existing in all men in the same degree; but, though there are few people in whom psychic ability is absolutely null, those who are able to obtain the most startling effects – such as the levitation of heavy bodies, the transport of objects, and above all, apparitions – are rarer still. The simplest effects produced are those of the rotation of objects and the production of raps and tilts. Without attaching any great importance to phenomena of this elementary character, we cannot pass them over altogether, for they suggest interesting questions, and are always useful in convincing beginners. But we must remark that the power of producing physical effects rarely exists in connection with the more advanced means of communication, such as involuntary writing, or inspirational speaking. Physical mediumship generally diminishes in proportion as a medium develops the higher modes of psychic activity.

161. *Natural* or *Involuntary mediums* are those who are influenced without their knowing it. They have no idea of their power, and the abnormal

occurrences which take place around them do not appear to them at all extraordinary. Their peculiar ability seems to them to be a part of themselves, as is the case with people who are endowed with second-sight, and who have no suspicion that such is the case. Mediums of this description are well worthy of observation; and we should not neglect to collect and study all the facts that may come to our knowledge in regard to them. They are of all ages, young children often possessing this ability to a high degree. The ability is not, in itself an indication of a diseased state of body, for it is not incompatible with the soundest health. A person so constituted may be sickly, but, in that case, his ill health is due to some other cause, and medical treatment is therefore powerless to prevent the manifestation of his mediumship. This ability may undoubtedly co-exist with some forms of physical weakness but it is never produced by it. There is no reason for dreading this ability from a health point of view because mediumship only becomes a cause of bodily weakness when the medium uses his power continuously, and thus makes a too lavish emission of his vital fluid, which is always injurious to his bodily health.

162. Reason revolts at the idea of the torture, both moral and physical, too often inflicted by science upon feeble and delicate people, in order to ascertain whether there is, or is not, deception on their part in the production of the phenomena we are considering. The experiments to which such people are often subjected, and which are entered into with malevolent or hostile sentiments, are always injurious to sensitive people; and serious injury is often done to the system by tests which may, in some cases, be justly designated as a trifling with life.

Dispassionate observers know that there is no necessity for expedients such as are sometimes resorted to in cases of this kind; the abnormal phenomena exhibited by this class of patients being connected with the moral rather than with the physical nature, for which reason they cannot be explained by purely physical science.

From the fact that these phenomena are closely allied to the moral nature, whatever might tend to over-excite the imagination of such patients should be scrupulously avoided. We know the evil effects that may result from fear; and people would be less frequently guilty of the imprudence of appealing to this sentiment, if they knew all the cases of imbecility and epilepsy that have been occasioned by nursery terrors. What, then, must be the effect of persuading weak minds that they are possessed by the devil?

Those who sanction such ideas know not how heavy a responsibility they assume, for, by so doing, they may cause the death of a fellow creature. And the danger of such ideas is not confined to a single individual, but is shared by all the inmates of the same house, who may also be made ill by the idea that their abode is a den of demons. This direful belief led to the commission of innumerable acts of atrocity in times of ignorance and superstition. But even in those dark and gloomy days, the inquisitors ought to have known that, in burning the body of those who were reputed to be

possessed by the devil, they could not burn the devil; and that, in order to get rid of the devil, it was the devil himself that would have had to be killed. spiritist doctrine, by enlightening us concerning the true cause of all these phenomena, gives the death blow to belief in the devil. *So far*, *then*, *from giving our sanction to that belief it is our bounden duty*, *in the interests of morality and humanity*, *to combat and destroy it wherever it exists*.

Whenever *involuntary mediumship* develops itself spontaneously in an individual, it should be allowed to follow its natural course. Nature is wiser than man and Providence, forecasting its ends, may use the humblest of us as an instrument for the accomplishment of the greatest designs. It must, however, be admitted that this phenomenon sometimes attains proportions which render it annoying and fatiguing to all who are in contact with a medium of the character in question; and in all such cases, as we have already remarked (Chap. V. *Concerning spontaneous physical manifestations*), we should endeavor to enter into communication with the disturbing spirit, so as to find out what he wants.

The invisible beings who reveal their presence by troublesome manifestations are generally spirits of an inferior order, and such as may be controlled by moral ascendancy; and this ascendancy we must both seek and acquire if we would influence such uncomfortable visitants.

In order to do this, we must begin by modifying the mediumship of the individual through whose fluid the phenomena occur, so as to change his state from that of a *natural* (or involuntary) *medium* to that of a *voluntary medium*. A result is thus effected analogous to what occurs when natural somnambulism is put a stop to, as is usually done by the super inducing of magnetic somnambulism; in which case, the action of the ability which emancipates the soul is not arrested, but merely turned in another direction. It is the same with psychic ability. Instead of attempting to prevent the production of the phenomena (which can rarely be done, and cannot be attempted without danger), the medium must be urged to produce the same phenomena voluntarily, thus making the spirit work by an exertion of his will. In this way, he acquires a mastery over the spirit, and often succeeds in converting him into a docile servant, instead of the tyrant he was before. It is worthy of remark that, in circumstances of this kind, a child has often no less, or even more authority than an adult; a fact which gives new proof of that capital point of our doctrine, *viz.*, that a child is only a child as regards his body, that his spirit possesses the degree of development he had acquired before his present incarnation, and that he has necessarily a proportional ascendancy over spirits whose development is inferior to his own.

The moralization of an obsessing spirit, through the counsels of an influential and experienced third party, is often efficacious when the medium is not in a state to act for himself. We shall return to this point by and by.

163. It would seem, at first sight, that people who are endowed with a large amount of natural electricity, might be placed in this category of mediums. Such people are veritable *human torpedoes*, and produce, by their mere contact, all the effects of magnetic attraction and repulsion but we should be wrong in regarding them as *mediums*, for mediumship presupposes the direct intervention of a spirit, while, in the cases we are speaking of conclusive experiments have proved that electricity is the sole cause of the phenomena in question. This curious ability, which we may almost call an infirmity, is sometimes allied to mediumship, as is seen in the history of the *Spirit-rapper of Bergzabern*, already alluded to; but it is often entirely independent of mediumship. As we have already remarked, the *only proof* spirit-intervention in a given phenomenon is *its intelligent character*; whenever this characteristic is lacking, we may safely assume that the phenomenon is due to some purely physical cause. It is a question whether *electrical people* have not a special aptitude for becoming *physical mediums*; we think they have, but this is a point which can only be decided by experience.

2. Sensitive or Impressionable Mediums.

164. We give this designation to people who are able to recognize the presence of spirits by a vague impression, a sort of shuddering sensation, running through their whole body, and for which they cannot account. This variety of mediumship has no very decided characteristic. All mediums being necessarily impressionable, this quality maybe regarded as being general rather than special; but it is an indispensable condition of all other forms of mediumship. It is different from purely physical and nervous impressionability, with which it must not be confounded; for there are people whose nerves are by no means delicate, and who are nevertheless affected by the presence of spirits, while others, whose nerves are *very* irritable, have no perception of their presence.

The ability to perceive the presence of spirits is developed by habit, and may become so subtle as to enable one who is endowed with it to recognize, by impression, not only the good or evil nature of the spirit at his side, but even his individuality; just as a blind man, with an indefinable ability of perception, recognizes the approach of such and such a person, so a medium of the kind we are considering recognizes the presence of certain spirits. A good spirit always produces an agreeable impression; an evil spirit, on the contrary, produces an impression that is painful and disagreeable and causes a feeling of anxiety; it seems to bring with it, so to say, an odor of impurity.

3. Clairaudient Mediums.

165. These mediums hear the voice of spirits: some times, as we have observed when speaking of pneumatophony, it is an inner voice that speaks to the interior consciousness; sometimes it is an exterior voice, clear and

distinct as that of a person in the flesh. Clairaudient mediums are thus enabled to enter into conversation with spirits.

When they are in the habit of communicating with certain spirits, they recognize them immediately by the character of their voice. People who are not endowed with this ability can communicate with spirits through the intermediacy of a bearing medium, who thus plays the part of an interpreter.

This ability is a very agreeable one when the medium hears only good spirits, or those whom he evokes; but it Is not so when, as sometimes happens, he is violently assailed by some hostile spirit, or forced, by some backward and troublesome persecutor, to listen to unpleasant or unseemly remarks. In all such cases, it is necessary to get rid of the obsessing spirit by the means which we shall point out in our chapter on *Obsession*.

4. Trance Mediums.

166. Clairaudient mediums, who only transmit what is said to them by spirits, are not what are properly called *trance mediums*, who very frequently hear nothing, the spirit merely acting upon their organs of speech, as he acts upon the hand of writing mediums. A spirit, when he wishes to communicate, makes use of the most flexible organ that he finds in the medium; from one, he borrows the hand; from another, the voice; from a third, the hearing. The trance medium generally speaks without knowing what he says, and often gives utterance to instructions far above the reach of his own ideas, knowledge, and intelligence. Though he may be perfectly awake, and in his norm a spirit, as he can do through the agency of a clairaudient medium.

The passiveness of trance mediums is not, however, so complete in all cases; for some of them have an intuition of what they say at the time they pronounce the words transmitted through them by the spirit. We shall return to this variety when we treat of *intuitive mediums*.

5. Clairvoyant Mediums.

167. Clairvoyant mediums are those who are endowed with the ability to see spirits. There are some who possess this ability in their normal state and when they are perfectly awake, and who preserve an exact recollection of what they have seen. Others only see spirits when they are in a somnambulic state, or one bordering on it. This ability is rarely permanent; it is almost always the effect of a momentary and passing crisis. We may place in the category of Clairvoyant mediums all people endowed with second-sight. The possibility of seeing spirits in dreams results, undoubtedly, from a sort of mediumship; but, properly speaking, it does not constitute a clairvoyant medium. We have already explained this variety of mediums.

The clairvoyant medium thinks he sees with his bodily eyes, like those who have second-sight, but it is in reality his soul that sees; which accounts for the fact that clairvoyant mediums see with their eyes shut just as well as

when they are open, and that a blind man can see spirits as well as a man possessed of eyesight. This seeing of spirits by blind men is a very interesting point; it would be important to ascertain whether this ability is more common among the blind than among others. Spirits who had been blind during life have told us, after their death, that, when in the flesh, they had, through the soul, a perception of certain objects, so that they were not plunged in utter obscurity.

168. We must distinguish between the accidental and spontaneous sight of apparitions and the ability of *clairvoyant mediums*. The first is frequent, especially at the moment of the death of people who have been loved or known by us, and who come to tell us that they are no longer of this world. There are numerous examples of this nature as well as visions during sleep. At other times, relatives or friends who have been dead, as regards the flesh, for a longer or shorter time, appear to us, either to warn us against danger, to give us good counsel, or to ask of us a service. The service which a spirit asks is generally that something may be done which he was unable to accomplish before his death; or he may ask for the help of our prayers. The seeing of these apparitions is an isolated fact which has always an individual and personal character, and does not constitute an *ability*.

An *ability* consists in the possibility, if not permanent, at least very frequent, of seeing any spirit who comes near us, even though a perfect stranger. It is this ability which constitutes, strictly speaking, a *clairvoyant medium*.

Among clairvoyant mediums, there are some who only see the spirits who are evoked, and of whom they are able to give minute descriptions; they describe, in detail, their gestures, expression, features, costume, and even the sentiments by which they appear to be animated. There are others with whom this ability is more general, who perceive all the spirit-population around us, and see spirits going and coming, and performing all the acts of their routine of life.

169. We once went to the Opera, when *Oberon* was being performed, in company with an excellent clairvoyant medium. Many of the seats were vacant, but these were seen by the medium to be occupied by spirits who appeared to be attending closely to what was going on. Other spirits were seen to approach the spectators, and seemed to be listening to their conversation. Upon the stage, quite another scene was being enacted; behind the actors were several jovial-looking spirits, who were amusing themselves by making grotesque imitations of their gestures; others, more seriously disposed, seemed to be influencing the actors, and endeavoring to inspire them with energy. One spirit remained throughout the evening close to one of the principal female singers and appeared to the medium, it had somewhat questionable intentions. We evoked this spirit, during one of the interludes, and he came to us, and reproached us severely for our rash judgment of him. “I am not what you imagine,” said he, “I am her spirit-guide and protector; it is I who am charged to direct her.” After some minutes of very serious conversation, he left us, saying: “Adieu! She is in

her box; I must go and watch over her." We then evoked the spirit of Weber, and asked him what he thought of the execution of his work. "The performance is not bad," he replied, "but it lacks energy; the actors sing, and that is all; there is no inspiration in their work. Wait a moment," he added, "I will try to give them a little of the sacred fire." He was then seen hovering over the stage; an effluence seemed to ooze from him and to envelope the actors, and a decided increase of energy was observable in their acting through the rest of the performance.

170. Here is another fact proving the influence that spirits exercise over men, without the latter being aware of it. We were one evening at a theatre, accompanied by another clairvoyant medium. Having entered into conversation with a *spirit-spectator*, the latter said to us: "You see those two ladies who are alone in that box, in the first tier; I am going to make them leave the theatre!" No sooner had he said this, than he was perceived to enter the box in question and to speak to the two ladies, who had been very attentive to the performance, but who suddenly looked at each other, appeared to consult together, left their box, and did not return. The spirit then saluted us with a comic gesture, to show that he had kept his word; but we saw no more of him, and were therefore unable to ask him for an explanation of what he had done. We have often been a witness, in this way, to the part that spirits play among us; we have observed them in many of the places where men and women meet, at balls, concerts, sermons, funerals, weddings, etc.; and we have every where found that some of them were stimulating bad passions, fanning discord, exciting disputes, and rejoicing in their power for evil, while others, on the contrary, were seen combating this pernicious influence with counsels that were, alas, but rarely listened to.

171. An ability to see spirit may doubtless be developed; but it is one of which it is wiser to await the natural development, without urging it, thus avoiding the danger of becoming the sport of our imagination. Where the ability exists, it manifests itself spontaneously, sooner or later; and we should, as a rule, rest content with such power as God has given us, without seeking for what may be impossible, as by desiring too much, we risk the loss of what we have.

When we said that spontaneous apparitions frequently occur (107), we did not mean to assert that they are very common; as for clairvoyant mediums, properly so-called, they are comparatively rare, and we must always be on our guard with respect to those who claim to be such, and not admit anything short of positive proof In judging of such cases, we must take into consideration the character of the medium for morality and sincerity; but it is, above all, the details given by the seer that prove the genuineness of his vision. There are cases which leave absolutely no doubt in the mind; as, for instance, when a medium gives us, by description, an exact portrait of the spirit of someone whom he has not known in his life. The following fact speaks for itself.

A widow lady, whose deceased husband frequently communicated with her, found herself one day in company with a clairvoyant medium who knew nothing of her or of her family, and who presently exclaimed: “I see a spirit near you.” “Ah!” replied the lady; “it is probably my husband, who hardly ever quits me.” “No,” said the medium,
“It is a woman. She is no longer young; she wears a singular headdress; she has a white band over her forehead.”
By this peculiarity, and by other descriptive details given by the medium, the lady fully recognized her grandmother, about whom she had not been thinking at the moment. If the medium had wished to fake psychic abilities, he might easily have guessed the widow’s thoughts; yet, instead of the husband of whom she was thinking, he saw a woman with a peculiar headdress, of which he could have had no idea. This fact proves, moreover, that what the medium saw was *not* a reflection of his own mind.

6. Sleepwalking Mediums.

172. Sleepwalking may be regarded as a psychic function, or rather we should say, that sleepwalking and psychic abilities frequently go hand in hand. The sleepwalker acts under the influence of his own spirit; it is his own soul which, in its moments of emancipation, sees, hears, and perceives, beyond the limits of the senses what he expresses he draws from himself. His ideas are generally more just than in his normal state, and his knowledge is more extended, because his soul is free; in a word, the somnambulic or sleepwalking state is a sort of foretaste of the spirit-life. The medium, on the contrary, is the instrument of an external intelligence; he is passive; and what he says does not come from himself. In other words, the sleepwalker expresses his own thoughts, and the medium expresses those of another. But the spirit who communicates through an ordinary medium may do so through a sleepwalker; the soul-emancipation of somnambulism often rendering spirit-communication even more easy. Many sleepwalkers see spirits perfectly, and describe them with as much precision as do clairvoyant mediums; they converse with them, and transmit their thoughts to us; and what they say, when beyond the circle of their personal knowledge, is often suggested to them by spirits. The following is a remarkable example of the joint action of the sleepwalker’s own spirit and of another spirit.
173. A friend of ours had a somnambulic subject, a lad of about fourteen years of age, of very limited intelligence, and very imperfectly educated. But, in the somnambulic state, he gave proofs of extraordinary lucidity and great penetration. He excelled especially in the treatment of disease, and cured a great number of people who had been regarded as incur able. One day, he gave a consultation to a sick man, whose malady he described with entire exactness. – “That is not enough,” said a bystander, “you must now tell us the remedy.” – “I cannot do so,” he replied, “my angel-doctor is not here.”– “What do you mean by your ‘angel-doctor’?” – “Why, the one who

prescribes the remedies." – "Then it is not you who see the remedies?" "No; did I not say that it is my angel-doctor who tells me what I am to prescribe?"
Thus, in the case of this sleepwalker, the *seeing* of the disease was the act of his own spirit, which, for that part of his work, had no need of assistance; but the remedies were dictated by another, so that when this other was not present, the sleepwalker could say nothing about them. Left to himself, he was only a *sleepwalker*; assisted by him whom he called his "angel-doctor," he was a *somnambulic medium*.
174. Sleepwalking lucidity is a subconscious ability and is entirely independent of the elevation, advancement, or even the moral state of the subject. A sleepwalker may be very lucid, and yet, if his spirit is but little advanced; he may be incapable of solving certain problems. The sleepwalker, who speaks from his own power, may say good or bad things, may be true or false, may act well or ill, according to the elevation or inferiority of his spirit; he may or may not be assisted by another spirit, who may supply his insufficiency; or he may be acted upon by a lying, frivolous, or even wicked spirit, just as is the case with a medium; but, in his case, as in all cases, his moral qualities have a powerful influence in attracting to him good spirits. (See *The Spirits' Book*, No. 425, and following chapter)

7. Healing Mediums.

175. We only allude here to this variety of mediums in order that we may not seem to overlook them; for this subject requires more ample treatment than we can give to it in this place. We will now only remark that this kind of mediumship consists principally in the gift, possessed by certain people, of healing by the laying-on of hands, by the look, by a mere gesture, without the help of medication. It will no doubt be said that this is nothing but mesmerism. It is evident that the animal-magnetic fluid has much to do with it; but when this phenomenon is carefully examined, we perceive that there is in it something more. The ordinary mesmeric treatment is a regular one, followed up according to rule and method; psychic treatment is quite different.
Most hypnotists would be healers, if capable of proceeding with system and judgment while in healing mediums, the ability is spontaneous, and some of them possess it without ever having heard of hypnotism.
The intervention of an occult power, which constitutes mediumship, becomes unmistakable under certain circumstances especially when we consider that the majority of those who may be regarded as undoubted healing mediums have recourse to prayer; for prayer is unquestionably an *invocation* as well as an *evocation* (131).
176. The following conversation occurred between ourselves and spirits we questioned in reference to this subject:
(1) Can we consider people endowed with magnetic power as forming a variety of mediums?

“You surely can have no doubt on that point.”
(2) A medium is an intermediary between spirits and men but the hypnotist finding, as he does, his force in himself, does not appear to be the intermediary of any external power.
“You are mistaken; the magnetic force undoubtedly resides in the man himself; but it is increased by the action of the spirits whom he calls to his aid. For example, when you hypnotize with a view to healing, you invoke the aid of a good spirit, who is interested in you and in your subject; that spirit increases your willpower, directs your fluid, and gives to it the qualities required for effecting the desired cure.”
(3) Yet there are very good hypnotists who do not believe in spirits.
“Do you suppose that spirits only act for those who believe in them? Those who hypnotize with good intentions are *always* seconded by good spirits. Every man, when animated by good intentions, calls good spirits to him without suspecting it; and so, too, does a man practically invoke evil spirits, when his desires and intentions are evil.”
(4) If a healing medium believes that spirits help him, does that belief enable him to act with greater efficacy?
“Such a man might do things that would seem to you to be miracles.”
(5) Is it true that some people have really the gift of healing simply by the touch, without having recourse to mesmeric passes?
“Assuredly it is; have not you many examples, of this gift?”
(6) In such a case, is it the hypnotic action, or is it solely the influence of spirits, that effects the cure?
“It is both. Such people are really mediums, for they act under the influence of spirits; but that does not imply that they are mediums for writing or other phenomena, as you understand mediumship.”
(7) Can this power be transmitted?
“Not the power; but the knowledge which enables the possessor of that power to make an efficient use of it. There are people who would not suspect themselves to have this power, if they did not believe that it had been transmitted to them by something higher than themselves.”
(8) Can cures be effected by prayer alone?
“Yes, in some cases, if God permits it; but when it is for the good of the sufferer to continue to suffer, your prayer is not granted.”
(9) Are some forms of prayer more efficacious than others?
“It is mere superstition to attribute special virtue to certain words; and only ignorant or lying spirits foster such ideas by prescribing forms. For people but little enlightened, and incapable of comprehending things purely spiritual, a form may be useful, by inspiring them with confidence; but, even then, the efficacy of the prayer is not in the *form* but in the *faith* which is increased by the idea attached to the use of the form.”

8. Automatic Writing.

177. This name is given to mediums who obtain direct writing, an ability which has hitherto remained an exceptional one, though it may probably be developed by exercise. As previously remarked, its practical utility is mainly limited to the evident proof thus afforded of the intervention of an occult power. Experience alone can show whether a person possesses it or not; each can try for himself, asking the aid of his spirit-protector.

According to the degree of the medium's power, he obtains simple strokes, signs, letters, words, phrases, or entire pages. It is usually sufficient to place a folded sheet of paper in the place designated by the spirit, leaving it there for a few minutes, a quarter of an hour, or a longer time, as the case may be. Concentration and harmoniousness of thought being necessary conditions of success, it would be difficult to obtain anything of the kind when the sitters have met together with no serious views, or when they are not animated by sympathetic and kindly sentiments. (See the explanation of direct writing, Chap. VIII. *Laboratory of the Invisible World*, 127 *et seq.*, Chap. XII. *Pneumatography*)

We now proceed to a fuller consideration of writing mediums.

CHAPTER 15

Writing Mediums

Mechanical Mediums – Intuitive Mediums – Semi-mechanical Mediums – Inspirational or Involuntary Mediums – Presentient Mediums.

178. Of all our means of communicating with spirits, manual writing is the simplest, most convenient, and most complete, for it enables us to establish regular and continuous relations with spirits, and thus to ascertain their nature and quality, to learn their thoughts, and to appreciate them at their true value. The ability to write, moreover, is the one that is most susceptible of being developed by exercise.

Mechanical Mediums.

179. If we observe the movements of a table, a planchette, etc., we cannot doubt that a direct action is exercised by the communicating spirit on these objects.

They are sometimes shaken so violently that they get away from the medium's hands; they sometimes turn towards, or touch, some particular person or people in the circle; at other times, their movements testify joy, affection, or anger. In the same way, when a pencil is held in the medium's hand, it is sometimes thrown forcibly to a distance, or the hand itself is agitated convulsively, and strikes the table angrily, while the medium himself is perfectly calm, and surprised at finding that he is not master of his movements. Occurrences of this kind, however, always indicate the presence of imperfect spirits; spirits of high degree are calm, dignified, and gentle; when not met with suitable respect, they retire, and their place is taken by others of lower rank. A spirit, therefore, can express his thoughts directly, through an object of the movements of which the hand of the medium is only the fulcrum, or indirectly, by his action on the hand itself.

When a spirit acts directly on the medium's hand, he gives to it an impulsion altogether independent of its owner's will, causing it to write on uninterruptedly as long as he has any thing to say, and to stop when he has finished.

The most interesting and valuable characteristic of this mode of mediumship is the unconsciousness of the medium in regard to what he is writing, and of which he has often not the remotest idea; this absolute unconsciousness constitutes what are called *passive* or *mechanical* mediums, and is an exceedingly precious ability, because it excludes all doubt as to what is written being independent of the medium's mind.

Intuitive Mediums.

180. A spirit can also transmit his thought through the intermediacy of the soul of the medium himself. The disincarnate spirit does not, in this case, cause the medium to write by acting on his hand; for he neither holds nor

guides it, but acts directly upon the incarnate soul, with which he temporarily identifies himself.

The soul of the medium, under this impulsion, directs his hand, and the hand moves the pencil. We have, in this place, to take note of a very important point, *viz.*, that the disincarnate spirit does not substitute himself for the medium's soul, for the soul cannot be displaced; but he *dominates it* without the medium's being aware of his action, and impresses it with his will. And yet the part played, in such a case, by the medium's soul, is not simply passive; for it is the medium's soul that receives and transmits the thought of the disincarnate spirit, and he is therefore aware of what he is writing, although the thoughts are not his, and is what we call an *intuitive medium*.

"If this be the case," it may be objected, "there is nothing to prove that the medium is not writing his own thoughts instead of those of another spirit." We reply that, in fact, it is sometimes very difficult to ascertain this point. But we may add that we cannot refuse to recognize the fact of suggestion when thoughts are expressed which have never before arisen in the medium's mind, which flow into it spontaneously as he writes, and which are often not only contrary to his ideas and convictions, but notably beyond his knowledge and intellectual capacity.

The part played by a *mechanical* medium is that of a machine. The *intuitive* medium, on the contrary, acts as a dragoman, or interpreter, and, in order to transmit a thought, must necessarily understand it; but still, this thought is not *his* thought, for it only *passes through* his brain.

Semi-mechanical Mediums.

181. In the case of purely mechanical mediums, the movement of the hand is independent of the will; with the intuitive medium, that movement is voluntary. The semi-mechanical medium participates in the qualities of both the others; he feels an impulsion that is given to his hand, independently of his will, but, at the same time, he knows, as he goes on, what he is writing. With the mechanical medium, the thought *follows* the act of writing; with the intuitive medium, it *precedes* it; with the semi- mechanical medium, it *accompanies* it. These last-named mediums are the most common of all.

Inspirational Mediums.

182. Everyone who, either in the normal state or in trance, receives an influx of thoughts that are foreign to the action of his own mind, may be included in the category of *inspirational mediums*. They are, in fact, a variety of the *intuitive medium*, with this difference, that the intervention of an occult power is much less evident in their case; so that, with inspirational mediums, it is even more difficult to distinguish their own thought from that which is suggested, than in the case of the intuitive medium.

The peculiar characteristic of the inspirational medium is *spontaneousness*.

And here let us remark that inspiration comes to us all, from spirits who influence us, for good or for evil, in every circumstance of our lives, and in every resolution we make, and it may therefore be truly said that, in this respect, *everyone is a medium*, for there is no one who has not about him his familiar spirits, who do their utmost to suggest salutary or pernicious counsels to those with whom they are connected; a truth which, were we duly penetrated with its reality and importance, would frequently lead us to oppose a more effectual resistance to the suggestions of evil, by seeking the inspiration of our guardian-angel in our moments of uncertainty as to what we should say or do. At such times, we should invoke that watchful guardian with fervor and confidence, as a Providentially-appointed friend; and, if we did so, we should often be astonished at the new ideas which would arise in our minds, as though by enchantment, whether for the taking of an important decision, or for the accomplishing of our special work. If, after such an appeal for guidance, no distinct idea occurred to us, it would show that we must wait a little longer before taking a decision. It is evident that an idea which arises spontaneously in our minds is really foreign to ourselves, because, if it had been always in our mind, we should always have been in possession of it, and there would have been no reason why it should not have been called up by a conscious act of our own will. He who is not blind has only to open his eyes, when he will, in order to see; in the same way, he who has ideas of his own has them always at his disposal; if they do not come at his will, it is because he has to get them elsewhere than from his own stock.

From the foregoing considerations it is evident that we may include in this category the people who, without being endowed with superior intelligence, and without any modification of their normal state, have flashes of intellectual lucidity which give them, for the moment, an unusual facility of conception and of expression, and sometimes a presentiment of future events. In what are rightly spoken of as “moments of inspiration,” the flow of ideas is abundant and continuous, our thoughts succeeding one another in an orderly enchaining, through the action of an involuntary, spontaneous, and almost feverish impulsion; it appears to us, at such times, as though some superior intelligence had come to our aid, and our mind seems to have been suddenly relieved of a burden.

183. All those who are possessed of genius, artists, poets, scientific discoverers, great writers, etc., are doubtless spirits of superior advancement, able to comprehend and to conceive great ideas; and it is precisely because of this ability that the spirits who desire the accomplishment of some particular work select them as their instruments, suggesting to their minds the trains of thought required for their special ends, so that, in a majority of cases, “men of genius” are *mediums without being aware of it*. Many of them, however, have a vague intuition of this extraneous help, and everyone who seeks inspiration performs, unconsciously, an act of evocation, whenever he makes an appeal to his

“good genius” to come to his aid; an appeal that is often made, but which would be simply absurd if he who makes it had not an intuitive hope of its being heard: and this assertion is confirmed by the replies made to the following questions, by the spirits whom we have interrogated in regard to this subject.

What is the primal cause of inspiration?

“The communication of his thoughts by a spirit.”

Is inspiration confined to the revelation of great things?

“No; it often has reference to the most commonplace circumstances of your daily life. For instance, you may have thought of going somewhere, but a secret voice tells you not to go, because there is danger in the way; or it tells you to do something which you have not thought of doing: this is inspiration. There are very few people who are not more or less ‘inspired’ in this way, at certain moments.”

– May authors, painters, musicians, and so on, be considered, in their moments of inspiration, as mediums?

“Yes; for, in such times, their soul is freer, more disengaged from matter, and recovers a portion of its spiritual abilities; and it therefore receives, with greater facility, the communications of other spirits who inspire it with their own suggestions.”

Presentient Mediums.

184. The kind of impression which we call *presentiment* is a vague intuition of future things. This ability, more or less developed in certain mediums, is sometimes the result of a sort of second-sight, by which they obtain glimpses of the consequences of things present, and thus perceive the filiation of events to come; but it is also, in many cases, the result of occult communications. It is to people who are thus endowed, and who constitute a variety of the *inspired mediums*, that we give the appellation of *presentient mediums*.

CHAPTER 16

Special Mediums

Special aptitudes of Mediums – Synoptical table of the different varieties of Mediums.

185. Besides the varieties of mediumship already described, there are an infinite variety of shades, which may be considered as *personal* being determined by the *particular aptitudes of the medium himself* without reference to the qualities and enlightenment of the manifesting spirit.

The nature of a communication is always in keeping with the nature of the spirit by whom it is made, and bears the stamp of his elevation or inferiority, of his knowledge or ignorance; but, among spirits of equal advancement from the hierarchical point of view, there is an evident tendency in each spirit to occupy himself specially with one thing rather than with another. Rapping spirits, for example, rarely go beyond physical manifestations; and, among spirits who give intelligent communications, we find that some are poets, while others show themselves as musicians, draughts men, moralists, scientific searchers, physicians, etc. We are now speaking of the great mass of ordinary spirits; for, when spirits have reached a certain degree of elevation, their aptitudes are blended in the unity of perfection. But, besides the special aptitude of each spirit, there is that of the medium, who is, for the spirit, an instrument more or less responsive to his desire, more or less flexible, and in whom the spirit perceives peculiar qualities that are not always perceptible by us.

To employ an illustration – A skilful musician possesses several violins, all of which appear, to ordinary observers, to be good instruments, but which, for the artist himself, are very different, presenting varieties of tone, etc., that lead him to choose one in preference to another; varieties of quality that he distinguishes rather through a sort of intuition than by any definite rule. Thus it is with mediums among those who appear to us to be equal in point of psychic power, a spirit will prefer one or other, according to the kind of communication which he desires to make. Thus, for instance, we find people who, as mediums, write admirable poetry, although, in their ordinary state, they may never have made a couplet in their lives; and, on the contrary, we find poets, who, as mediums, can write nothing but prose, much as they desire to do otherwise. It is the same In regard to painting, drawing, music, etc. There are some who, though possessing, when left to themselves, no scientific knowledge, have a peculiar aptitude for receiving scientific communications; others have a similar aptitude for historical studies; others do best as interpreters of spirit-moralists. In a word, whatever the medium's flexibility to the will of the spirits who communicate through him, he generally receives, most easily, communications of some particular character. Some mediums keep to a special circle of ideas, beyond which they receive only brief, imperfect, or erroneous communications. And

besides the question of psychic aptitudes, there is that of the sympathies of the spirits themselves, which lead them to communicate more or less willingly with such and such a medium; so that, other things being equal, the same spirit will be much more explicit and successful with some mediums than with others, solely because they suit him better.

186. It would therefore be a mistake to suppose that provided we have got hold of a good writing-medium, we are sure to obtain good communications of every sort.

The first point is, undoubtedly, to assure ourselves of the source from where the communications emanate, that is to say, of the qualities of the spirit who is communicating; but it is no less necessary to assure ourselves of the suitability of the instrument we furnish for the spirit's use; and we must therefore study the nature of the medium as carefully as that of the spirit, for their harmonious cooperation is essential to the obtaining of a satisfactory result. There is also a third element which plays a part equally important, *viz.*, the intention and sentiments of the questioner. In short – *Good communications can only be given by a good spirit, and, in order that a good spirit may be able to give them, he must have a good instrument, and must also be disposed to make use of it*. As a spirit reads our thought, he judges whether the question put to him deserves a serious answer, and whether the questioner is worthy to receive it; when this is not the case, he does not waste time in sowing good seed in stony places, and it is then that mocking and deceptive spirits find their opportunity and are quick to take advantage of it, being usually as little scrupulous about ends as about means, and ready to amuse themselves at the expense of those who are open to their suggestions.

Let us now recapitulate the principal varieties of mediumship, in order to present a sort of tabular view of them; comprising in our table those described in the preceding chapters, with reference to the numbers under which each is therein treated of in detail.

We have grouped the different varieties of mediums according to similarity of causes and effects, but without offering this classification as in any way absolute.

Some of them are frequently met with; others, on the contrary, are rare, and even exceptional, and we have been careful to mark them as such. The indications thus given have all been furnished by spirits, who, moreover, have reviewed and carefully revised our list and completed it by various observations, so that it may be said to be entirely their work. Whenever we have thought it desirable to give their observations textile, we have shown the fact by the employment of inverted commas; most of those thus quoted are given by the spirits who claim to have been Erastes and Socrates.

187. Mediums may be divided into two principal orders:

Physical mediums; those who have the power of obtaining physical manifestations (160).

Intellectual mediums; those who are more especially apt for receiving and transmitting intelligent communications (65 *et seq*).
All the other varieties belong to one or other of these two categories; some belong to both. If we analyze the different manifestations obtained through psychic influence, we shall see that there is, in all of them, a *physical effect*, and that, with the physical effect, there is usually combined *an intelligent effect*. It is sometimes difficult to establish a line of demarcation between the two; but this is of no practical consequence. We include, under the denomination of *intellectual mediums*, those who are especially able to serve as intermediaries for the transmission of regular and continuous communications (133).
188. *Varieties common to all types of mediumship*. *Sensitive mediums*; people who feel the presence of spirits by a peculiar impression, general or local, vague or decided. Most of these distinguish good or evil spirits by the nature of the impression caused by them (164).
“Mediums who are very sensitive and delicate should abstain from communicating with violent spirits, or with those who cause painful impressions, on account of the fatigue which results from such communication.”
Natural or unconscious mediums; those who call forth the phenomena spontaneously, without any action of their will, and for the most part unconsciously (161).
Voluntary mediums; those who have the power of calling forth the phenomena by an act of their will (160).
“However strong may be their will, they can, however, do nothing if the spirits refuse to cooperate with them; which proves that the phenomena are the result of the intervention of a power exterior to the medium.”
189. Special varieties of Physical Mediums.
Rapping mediums; those by whose influence noises and raps are produced. A very common variety of mediumship, whether voluntary or involuntary.
Motor mediums; those who produce the movement of inert bodies. These, also, are very common (61).
Mediums for displacements and suspensions; those who obtain the displacement of inert bodies, and their suspension in the air without any visible prop. There are some who are thus raised themselves, but these are very rare.
Mediums for musical effects; these obtain the playing of certain instruments without human contact.
Mediums for apparitions; those who obtain apparitions, whether fluidic or tangible, which are visible to lookers on. Very exceptional (100, quest. 27; 104).
Mediums for the transport of objects; those who are employed by spirits as auxiliaries in bringing objects to a circle. Exceptional (96). *Nocturnal mediums*; those who only obtain certain physical effects in the dark.

Here is the answer of a spirit to our inquiry as to whether such mediums should be considered as forming a separate variety:

“This form of mediumship may certainly be spoken of as a specialty, although the necessity of darkness has to do rather with surrounding conditions than with the nature of the medium, or with that of the manifesting spirits; for, in fact, some of these mediums get over this peculiar necessity, and the greater number of those who are mediums only in the dark could, by exercise, obtain the same manifestations in the light. There are but few of this variety of mediums; and we feel bound to point out that this peculiar form of mediumship offers a wide field for trickery, ventriloquism, acoustic tubes, etc., enabling charlatans to play upon credulity, and to pocket money. But jugglers in rooms, like jugglers in public halls, will be unmasked in the long run, and spirits will show them that it is not prudent for pretenders to intermeddle with their work. There are charlatans who will by and by get such raps on their knuckles as will disgust them with playing at mediumship; it is only a question of time.

ERASTES

Automatic Writing; those who obtain direct writing. This is a very rare phenomenon, and one easily imitated (177).

Remark – Our spirit-guides have insisted, contrary to our opinion, in placing direct writing in the order of physical phenomena, because, according to them,

“Intelligent effects are those for the production of which the spirit makes use of the medium’s brain, which is not done in the production of direct writing; the action of the medium, in this case, being altogether physical, while, in the case of the writing medium, though the action may be merely mechanical, the medium’s brain always takes an active part in it.”

Healing mediums; those who have the power of curing disease or relieving pain, by the imposition of hands or by prayer.

“This ability is not essentially psychic; it appertains to all true believers, whether mediums or not; it is often only a super excitement of the mesmeric power, strengthened, in case of need, by the cooperation of benevolent spirits” (175).

Developing mediums; people who, by their influence, have the power of developing mediumship in others.

“This is rather an effect of animal magnetism than a fact of mediumship properly so-called, for there is in it nothing that proves the intervention of a spirit. At all events it may be classed under the bead of physical effects.” (See Part Second, Chap. XVI I. *Formation of Mediums*).

190. Mediums for intellectual effects. – Different aptitudes. *Clairaudient mediums*; those who hear spirits. Very common. (165).

“There are many who fancy they hear what is only in their imagination.”

Trance mediums; those who speak under the influence of spirits. These are very common (196).

Clairvoyant mediums; those who see spirits when awake. An accidental and fortuitous sight of a spirit under some peculiar circumstances is very frequent; but the habitual view of spirits at will, and without distinction, is exceptional (167).

"This is an aptitude to which the normal state of the human organism is opposed; for this reason it is prudent not to accord a too ready belief to those who say that they see spirits."

Inspirational mediums; those to whom thoughts are suggested by spirits, most frequently without their being aware of it; whether in regard to the things of their everyday life, or to their intellectual labors (182).

Presentient mediums; people, who, under certain circumstances, have a vague intuition of future events in the domain of ordinary life (184).

Prophetic mediums; these are a variety of the *inspired mediums*, or of *presentient mediums*; they receive, by God's permission, and with more precision than do the presentient mediums, the pre-announcement of future things of general interest, which they are charged to predict for the enlightenment of mankind.

"Though there are true prophets, there are many more false ones, who mistake the dreams of their imagination for revelations, when they are not pretenders passing themselves off from ambition, for what they are not"

Sleepwalking mediums; those who, when in a sleepwalking state, are assisted by spirits (172).

Trance mediums; those who receive revelations from spirits when in a state of trance.

"Many Ecstatics are the sport of their own imaginations, and of deceitful spirits, who take advantage of their state of mental excitement. Ecstatics worthy of entire confidence are extremely rare."

Painting and Drawing mediums; those who paint and draw under the influence of spirits. We are speaking of those whose psychically produced works are worthy of attention, for we cannot apply this designation to mediums who, under the influence of mocking spirits, obtain absurd productions that would disgrace the merest schoolboy.

Frivolous spirits are often imitators; when some very remarkable drawings of scenes in Jupiter first appeared, there arose a vast number of pretended drawing mediums, through whom mocking spirits produced the most ridiculous things. One of them, desirous of eclipsing the drawings referred to, in dimensions, if not in quality, made a medium draw a picture filling so vast a number of sheets of paper as to attain the height of two storey's of a house. A number of other mediums were made to draw what claimed to be portraits, but which were mere caricatures (*Revue Spirite*, August, 1858).

Musical mediums; those who execute, compose, or write music, under the influence of spirits. They are mechanical, semi-mechanical, intuitive, and inspired; as are the mediums for literary communications (See *Mediums for musical effects*).

Varieties of Writing Mediums.

191. First Division – According to the mode of execution.

Psychographic mediums; those who have the ability to write under spirit-influence.

Mechanical writing mediums; those whose hands are acted upon by an involuntary impulse, and who are unconscious of what they write. Very rare (179).

Semi mechanical mediums; those whose hands are made to write involuntarily, but who are conscious of the words or the phrases thus written by them. These are the commonest of all (181).

Intuitive mediums; those with whose thought the spirit communicates, but whose hands are guided by their own will. They differ from inspirational mediums inasmuch as the latter do not necessarily write, while the intuitive writing-medium writes the thought which is suggested to him at the moment, on some subject previously determined upon (180).

"These are very numerous, but are also very subject to error, because they are often unable to discriminate between what comes from the communicating spirit, and what proceeds from their own brain."

Polygraphic mediums; those whose writing changes with the spirit who communicates, or who reproduce the handwriting of the spirit when in the flesh. The first of these are very common; but those who obtain the reproduction of the handwriting are much less 50 (219).

Polyglot mediums; those who have the ability to speak or write in languages that are unknown to them. These are very rare.

Illiterate mediums; those who write, as mediums, without knowing how to read or write in their ordinary state.

"These are still rarer than the preceding; there is a greater physical difficulty to be got over in their case."

192. Second division – According to the development of psychic ability.

Novice mediums; those whose psychic abilities are not yet completely developed, and who lack experience.

Unproductive mediums; those who obtain only insignificant results, such as monosyllables, letters, or mere strokes (See Chap. XVI I. *Formation of mediums*).

Fully formed mediums; they whose psychic abilities are completely developed, and who transmit spirit-communications easily, quickly, and without hesitation. It is evident that this perfection cannot be obtained without practice; in the case of *novice mediums*, the transmission is usually slow and difficult.

Laconic mediums; those who, though easily influenced, obtain only short and undeveloped communications.

Explicit mediums; the Communications obtained by these mediums have all the length and amplitude that could be arrived at by a writer of first-rate ability.

“This aptitude depends upon the expansibility and facility of combination of the fluids required. Spirits seek for mediums of this nature, for treating of subjects which demand full development.”

Experienced mediums; facility of writing, drawing, etc., is a result of habit, and is often quickly acquired while *experience* is the result of a serious study of all the difficulties of practical spiritism. Experience gives to the medium the tact necessary for judging of the quality of the spirits who manifest themselves, ascertaining their good or bad qualities, and discovering the tricks of deceptive spirits who falsely assume the appearances of truth. The importance of this quality is easily understood, for, without it, all others are useless. Unfortunately, many mediums confound *experience*, the fruit of study, with *aptitude*, the result of organization, and fancy themselves to be perfect, because they write with facility; they often reject counsel, and become the prey of hypocritical and lying spirits, who lay hold of them by flattering their vanity (See Chap. XXIII. *Obsession*).

Flexible mediums; those whose abilities enable them to lend themselves with great skill to a great diversity of communications, and through whom, all spirits, or nearly all, are able to manifest themselves, spontaneously, or in response to evocation.

“This variety of mediums differs but slightly from *sensitive mediums*.”

Exclusive mediums; those through whom one spirit manifests himself to the exclusion of all others, and answers for all the other spirits that may be called for through the intervention of the medium.

“Such exclusiveness is always the result of defective flexibility on the part of the medium. A good spirit may attach himself to a medium from sympathy, and for a laudable end; but, when the spirit is an evil one, he does this invariably with the view of keeping the medium dependent upon him. Such exclusiveness should be avoided, as it borders too closely on obsession “(See Chap. XXIII. *Obsession*).

Mediums for evocations; flexible mediums are naturally the fittest for obtaining this kind of manifestation, and for queries of detail that may be addressed to spirits.

“The answers of such mediums are almost always confined within a very narrow compass, incompatible with the treatment of general subjects.”

Mediums who receive spontaneous communications; they are used for the transmission of information spontaneously given by spirits who come without having been evoked. It is always difficult, and often impossible, to make the evocation of any given spirit through mediums in whom this aptitude exists as a special ability.

“Nevertheless, these are better provided with mediumistic tools than the mediums previously named. This expression, provided with tools refers to brain-material, for a larger amount of intelligence on the part of the medium is needed for spontaneous dictation than for evocations. By ‘spontaneous dictation’ I mean communications worthy of the name, and not

mere fragmentary sentences, or a few commonplace thoughts such as may be found in all human heads."

193. Third division. According to the kind and the specialty of communications. Verse-making mediums; those who most easily obtain communications in verse.

Inferior rhyming is common with mediums of this class; but good poetry, extremely rare.

Poetic mediums; without obtaining verse, these mediums usually get vaporous and sentimental communications. Such mediums are specially fitted to convey tender and affectionate messages. They are often, however, rather vague, and it would be useless to seek any definite instructions from them. This sort of mediumship is very common.

Positive mediums; their communications have usually all the clearness and precision required for the transmission of circumstantial details and exact information.

Mediums of this class are rare.

Literary mediums; they have neither the vagueness of poetic mediums, nor the dryness of positive mediums. Their dissertations show sagacity; their style, always correct and elegant, is sometimes remarkable for its eloquence.

Incorrect mediums; they sometimes obtain sensible and moral communications, but their style is diffuse, ungrammatical, and loaded with repetitions and ill-assorted terms.

"Decided inelegance of style arises generally from a defect of intellectual culture on the part of the medium. A medium with this drawback is therefore not, in this respect, a good instrument for a spirit to work with; but to this the spirit often attaches comparatively little importance, provided he can get his *thought* correctly conveyed, *that* being for him the essential point. When he can secure the correct expression of his meaning, a spirit generally leaves you free to turn your sentences in your own way. It is different with regard to the false or incoherent ideas which a communication may contain; for these always indicate inferiority on the part of the communicating spirit."

Historical mediums; those who have a special aptitude for treating of historical subjects. This ability, like all the others, is independent of the medium's knowledge for ignorant people, and even children, are often made to transmit psychically subjects far beyond their natural grasp. This is a very rare variety of the positive medium.

Scientific mediums; these, even though very ignorant, are especially adapted for obtaining communications relating to scientific subjects.

Medical mediums; their specialty is to act with greater facility than others, as interpreters of spirits for medical prescriptions. We must not confound these with *healing mediums*, for they do nothing more than transmit the spirit's thought, and possess no curative influence whatever. They are frequently met with.

Religious mediums; they usually receive communications of a religious character, and are employed by spirits to treat on religious questions, sometimes in opposition to their own beliefs and mode of worship.
Philosophic and moralistic mediums; the communications of this class of mediums have generally moral and philosophical questions for their object. Mediums who treat of morality are especially numerous.
"All these shades indicate varieties of the aptitudes of good mediums. As for those who have a special aptitude for obtaining communications of a scientific nature, whether medical, historical, or other, in advance of their present knowledge, you may rest assured that such mediums have possessed, in a former existence, the scientific knowledge they transmit; that this knowledge has remained with them, although latent; and that it constitutes a portion of the cerebral capacity which fits them for the use of the manifesting Spirit by facilitating the communication, on his part, of kindred ideas.
Such mediums are, for the communicating spirit, instruments more intelligent and manageable than an uncultivated intellect could be.

ERASTES."

Mediums for trivial and obscene communications; this qualification sufficiently indicates the sort of communications which certain mediums habitually receive, as well as the nature of the spirits who control them. Whoever has studied the various accessional degrees of the spirit-world is aware that there are spirits whose perversity equals that of the vilest of men, and who delight in expressing their thoughts in the coarsest language. Others, less abject, content themselves with communicating absurdities. We can well understand that mediums should wish to be delivered from so undesirable a preference, and that they should envy those who, in the communications they receive, are never troubled with unseemly words. Only through a strange aberration of mind, and an utter want of common sense, could such language be supposed to proceed from good spirits.
194. Fourth Division – According to the physical qualities of the medium.
Calm mediums; these always write slowly, and without showing the slightest agitation.
Rapid mediums; these write with greater rapidity than they could do, voluntarily, and in their ordinary state.
Spirits communicate through them with the swiftness of lightning; there would seem to be in them a superabundance of fluid, enabling spirits to identify themselves instantaneously with their organism. The rapidity with which these mediums write has sometimes the inconvenience of rendering their writing very difficult to read for any but the medium himself.
"Moreover, it is very fatiguing for the medium, because it causes a useless expenditure of fluid on his part."
Convulsive mediums; they become excited almost to feverishness; their hands, and sometimes their whole body, shakes and they are unable to control themselves. Much of this excitement may doubtless be attributable

to their organization; but it also depends, to a considerable degree, on the nature of the sprits who communicate through them. Good and kindly spirits always produce a gentle and agreeable impression; the bad, on the contrary, excite a painful one.

“Such mediums only exercise their talents rarely, for a too frequent repetition of such excitement might injure their nervous system.”

195. Fifth Division – According to the moral qualities of the medium.

We merely allude to these mediums in this place; reserving the fuller description of them for the chapters on *The moral influence of mediums*, on *Obsession*, on the *Identification of spirits*, and other topics to which we ask especial attention, in regard to the influence exercised by the good and bad qualities of mediums upon the reliability of the communications received by them, and the indications which enable us to decide between *imperfect mediums*, and those whom we may rightly consider as *good mediums*.

196. Imperfect Mediums.

Mediums who are obsessed; those who cannot rid themselves of importunate, deceptive spirits, but who are fully aware of, and regret, this obsession.

Fascinated mediums; those who are acted upon by deceptive spirits, but who are not aware of this obsession, and who are consequently under a delusion as to the nature of the communications they receive.

Subjugated mediums; those who are under the moral, and sometimes the physical, domination of evil spirits.

Frivolous mediums; those who do not take their abilities seriously, and who exercise it only for amusement or for futile objects.

Careless mediums; those who derive no moral profit from the instructions which they receive, and whose conduct and habits are not improved thereby.

Presumptuous mediums; those who assume themselves to be the only ones who are in communication with superior spirits. They believe themselves to be infallible, and regard as worthless and erroneous whatever does not come through themselves.

Proud mediums; those who feed their vanity with the communications which they receive, imagine themselves to have nothing more to learn in regard to spiritism, and do not apply to themselves the lessons often read to them by spirits. Not contented with the psychic abilities they possess, they imagine themselves to possess all the others.

Touchy mediums; they are a variety of the proud ones, and are hurt at the criticisms of which they are the object; they take offence at the slightest contradiction, and, if they show what they obtain, they do so in order to be admired, and not at all to profit by the opinion of the listeners. They generally take an aversion to those who do not applaud them unreservedly, and desert the meetings in which they cannot take a leading part.

“Let them go and play the peacock where they can obtain a more sympathetic hearing, or let them retire altogether; the meetings which they deprive of their presence lose but little by their withdrawal.”

Mercenary mediums; those who use their ability as a source of financial gain.

Ambitious mediums; those who, without putting a price upon the exercise of their gift, seek to turn it to their own advantage, social, or other.

Dishonest mediums; those who, possessing some genuine psychic abilities, simulate others which they do not possess, in order to give themselves importance.

Selfish mediums; those who use their gift only for personal ends, and who keep to themselves the communications they receive.

Jealous mediums; those who are vexed at seeing other mediums better developed, and more highly appreciated, than themselves.

All these bad qualities of mediums have necessarily their counterparts in good ones.

197. *Good Mediums*. *Serious mediums*; those who only use their gift for good and really useful ends, and who would regard it as a profanation to use them for the satisfaction of the curious and indifferent, or for any futile purpose.

Modest mediums; those who make no merit of the communications they receive, however good they may be they look upon themselves as being only the instruments of others, and do not regard themselves as infallible. Far from shunning disinterested counsel, in regard to the exercise of their mediumship, they seek it.

Devoted mediums; those who understand that the true medium has a mission to fulfill, and that he must be ready, when necessary, to sacrifice his tastes, habits, pleasure, time, and even his worldly interests, to the good of others.

Safe mediums; those who, in addition to their power, are worthy of confidence on account of their personal excellence and the elevated nature of the spirits who assist them, and who are thus the least likely to be deceived. We shall see hereafter that this security does not depend in any way upon the reputation of the names assumed by the communicating spirits.

“You must understand that, by thus classifying mediums according to their good and bad qualities, you are exposing yourself to the animosity of some of them; this, however, is of no importance. The number of mediums is increasing daily, and any who should take offence at these remarks would prove one thing, *viz.*, that they are not good mediums, in other words, that they are influenced by inferior spirits. But, as I have already said, all this is only for a short time; and mediums who misuse their gift will undergo the painful consequences of their acts, as has already occurred to some of them; they will learn, to their sorrow, the cost of turning, to the satisfaction of their earthly passions, a gift of God, accorded to them only for their moral

advancement. If you are unable to bring them back into the right road, pity them, for they will have to undergo a heavier expiation.

ERASTES

“This table is of great importance, not only for the mediums who seek sincerely and honestly, by studying it, to preserve themselves from the stumbling blocks to which they are exposed, but also for those who make use of mediums, because it will give them the measure of what may be reasonably expected from them. This table should be constantly before the eyes of everyone who occupies himself with spirit- manifestations; it embodies all the principles of the doctrine, and will contribute, more than you think to keep spiritism on its true road.

SOCRATES

198. All these varieties of mediumship present innumerable degrees of intensity; many of them, strictly speaking, are but different shades of the same color, but they are nevertheless the result of special aptitudes. Although the abilityy of a medium is rarely circumscribed within a single specialty, and although the same medium may possess several aptitudes, he has always one predominant aptitude, and *that* is the one he should cultivate, provided it be a useful one. It is a serious mistake to endeavor to force a medium to develop an ability he does not naturally possess. We should cultivate those of which the germ is seen to exist; but the attempt to develop abilities which we *do not* possess is, in the first place, a loss of time, and, in the second place, the surest way to weaken, and perhaps to lose, those which we *do* possess.

“When the germ of psychic functioning exists, it always shows itself by unequivocal signs.

By keeping to his own specialty, a medium is more likely to obtain useful and satisfactory results, he who tries to do everything, does nothing well. The desire to enlarge indefinitely the circle of one’s psychic abilities is a vainglorious pretension which will not be allowed to go unpunished; good spirits always abandon the presumptuous, who thus become the sport of liars. It is, unfortunately, no rare thing to see mediums discontented with the gifts they possess, and aspiring, from vanity or ambition, to the possession of exceptional abilities, which might bring them into prominence; a pretension which robs them of their most precious quality, that, *viz.*, of being *safe mediums*.

SOCRATES

199. The study of the specialty of mediums is absolutely necessary, not only on their own account, but also for those who make use of them for evocations. According to the nature of the spirits we desire to evoke, and the questions we wish to put to them, should be our choice of the medium whom we employ for the particular requirement we have in view; to take for this purpose the first we meet with is to expose ourselves to get unsatisfactory and erroneous answers. Let us take a couple of illustrations of this point from everyday life. We should not trust the first person we

came across to draw up a document, or even to copy one, merely because he knows how to write. A musician desires a song of his to be sung; he has at his command several singers, all skilful; nevertheless he does not choose at random, but selects, as his interpreter, the one whose voice, expression, and general qualities, are most likely to do justice to his composition. Spirits do the same in regard to their mediums; we cannot do better than follow their example.

It should be further remarked, that the shades presented by mediumship, and of which we might add others to those classified above, are not always identical with the character of the medium himself; thus, for example, a medium, naturally gay and jovial, may habitually receive serious communications, and *vice versa*; which fact is an evident proof that he is acted upon by the impulsion of an influence exterior to himself. We shall return to this subject in treating of *The moral influence of the medium* (Part 2, Chap. 20).

CHAPTER 17

Formation of Mediums

Development of Mediumship – Changes of handwriting – Loss and Suspension of Mediumship.

Development of Mediumship.

200. We shall here treat specially of writing-mediums, because theirs is not only the most common sort of mediumship, and the one which is the simplest and most convenient, but also because it is the one which gives the most satisfactory results, and is most sought after. Unfortunately, we have as yet no diagnosis which can indicate, even approximately, the possession of this ability; the physical signs which some people have supposed to indicate its existence are altogether uncertain. It is found in children and in old people, in men and in women, independently of health, or of intellectual and moral development and it has nothing to do with a person's temperament; there is but one way of ascertaining its existence, *viz.*, by actual experiment.

We can obtain writing, as we have seen, *indirectly*, by means of planchettes, etc., or *directly*, by the hand; to this latter method, as being the easiest and the most generally employed, we shall confine our remarks. Notwithstanding the simplicity of the Operation, which consists, as we have seen, in holding a pencil upon a sheet of paper, without any preparation, and just as we do in ordinary writing, several conditions are indispensable to success.

201. In the first place, as a physical condition, we recommend the avoidance of everything that can impede the free movement of the hand, which should not even touch the paper, if it can be helped.

The point of the pencil should rest lightly on the paper, touching it sufficiently to write, but not enough to offer any resistance. These precautions, however, are no longer needed when the medium has acquired the power of writing rapidly, for then no such obstacle can stop him.

202. It is of no consequence whether we use a pen or a pencil; some mediums prefer the pen, but this is only suitable for those who are already developed, and who write slowly; there are mediums who write so rapidly that to use a pen would be inconvenient, if not impossible. It is the same with mediums who write with jerking and irregularity, or under the influence of violent spirits who strike and break the nib and tear the paper.

203. Everyone who aspires to become a medium naturally wishes to communicate with the spirits of those who are dear to him; but he must moderate his impatience on this point, for communication with a given spirit is often impeded by physical difficulties which render it impossible for a beginner; In order that a given spirit may be enabled to communicate, there must be, between him and the medium, a fluidic harmony which it is sometimes neither easy nor possible to establish; it is only as a medium's

ability becomes developed, that he gradually acquires the necessary aptitude for entering into relation with whatever spirit may present himself. It may happen, also, that the particular spirit with whom he desires to correspond is not able to control the conditions in such a manner as to make is possible for him to manifest himself; even though *he may be present*; or he may not be able, or may not have the permission, to come just when the appeal is addressed to him. It is therefore better for beginners not to be too persistent in their demands for any particular spirit, to the exclusion of all others; for it often happens that the spirit thus sought after is not the one with whom the necessary fluidic connection can be most easily established, however great may be the affection between the parties. Before attempting to obtain communications from any given spirit, we must therefore secure a sufficient development of psychic ability; and, to this end, it is well to begin by making a general appeal to all our friends in the spirit-world, and especially to our Guardian Angel.

For this general evocation, no sacramental formula is needed; and whoever should pretend to give such a formula would lay himself open to a charge of charlatanism, for spirits attach no importance to any set forms. All evocations should nevertheless be made in the name of God, and in some such terms as the following, or in any similar ones: "*I pray Almighty God to permit a good spirit to communicate with me by writing* (or otherwise, as the case may be), *and I also beg my Guardian Angel to have the kindness to assist me, and to keep away evil or troublesome spirits*;" – or "*I pray Almighty God to permit the spirit of So-and-so to communicate with me*." In evoking individual spirits other than our personal friends and relations, we should always be careful to address ourselves only to those whom we know to be good and sympathetic, or who may be supposed to have some special motive for coming to us. In such cases, our evocation may be made in words like these: "*In the name of Almighty God, I beg the spirit of So-and-so to communicate with me*;" or "*I pray Almighty God to permit the spirit of So-and-so to communicate with me*;" or any other words of a similar character. We repeat it, the formula is nothing; a reverent and kindly frame of mind is everything. All present having united in the act of evocation, whatever may have been the form or mode employed, it is well to wait quietly for the spirit to manifest himself by the writing of some message, or by giving some other token of his presence. When the ability of the medium is typtologic, it is necessary to formulate the first questions in such a way as that the spirit may be able to answer them by "yes" and "no;" as, for example, "Are you here, So-and-so?" "Will you answer me?" or, in case of doubt,

"Will you give me your name?" Whom do you come for?" 'Do you want the alphabet?"

And so on. (See, for fuller details and practical counsels, Part 2, Chap. 25. *Evocations*)

It is possible that the spirit whose presence is most desired may come, or it may be some other spirit who comes; perhaps it may be a stranger, perhaps the guardian angel of the medium or of some other person present. The spirit who comes, makes himself known, usually, though not always, by giving his name; but then comes up the question of identity, one of the difficulties of practical spiritism requiring the greatest amount of experience for dealing with, and there are few beginners who ate not exposed to deception on this head.

204. What is far more important than the mode of evocation is calmness and concentration of thought, an ardent desire and firm determination to succeed; we do not mean the ephemeral determination which acts by fits and which is interrupted every minute by other matters, but a serious, persevering, sustained determination, *without impatience or feverish anxiety*. Mental concentration is favored by solitude, silence, and retirement from every thing that can trouble or disturb. We have only one other counsel to give; namely, to renew the attempt every day, sitting for ten or at most fifteen minutes at a time, and to continue the experiment for a fortnight, a month, two months, or more, if necessary. We know mediums that were only developed after six months' exercise, while others have written with ease the very first time they tried.

205. In order to avoid a waste of effort, it is well for beginners to ask, through some more fully developed medium, for the advice and assistance of some serious and advanced spirit; but it must be remarked that, when we inquire of spirits whether such and such a person is a medium or not, they almost always answer affirmatively, which does not prevent the attempts of many would-be mediums from being unsuccessful; a fact which is easily explained. In the first place, you ask a spirit a general question, and he gives you a general answer; in the next place, nothing, as we have seen, is so elastic as psychic ability, which may assume the greatest variety of forms, shades, and degrees. A man, therefore, may be a medium, without being aware of it, and in some mode quite different from that which he may be seeking after. To the vague question: "Am I a medium?" the spirit may answer "Yes;" but to the more precise question: "Am I a writing-medium?" he may answer "No." We must also take into account the character of the spirit interrogated; for some spirits are so careless or so ignorant that they answer at random, like giddy mortals; for which reason, we should endeavor to address ourselves only to enlightened spirits, who, in general, willingly reply to such questions, and point Out the best method of succeeding, is success be possible.

206. Beginners may often be brought on by employing, as a temporary help, the aid of a good writing-medium, already formed. If such a one places his hand, or merely his fingers, upon the hand which is to be helped to write, the latter rarely fails to do so, and often almost immediately. What occurs in such a case is easily understood. The hand which holds the pencil becomes, so to say, an appendix of the hand which is to be '*possessed'*, just as does a

planchette, or any other contrivance of a similar nature; but the exercise of the latter is none the less useful, and, if regularly and frequently repeated, will greatly aid the neophyte in surmounting the physical difficulty resulting from the resistance of his organism, and in developing his psychic ability. It is sometimes sufficient to hypnotize the beginner, with the *intention* of making him write; the fully developed medium placing his hand on the shoulder of the latter. We have seen people begin to write at once under such an influence. The same effect may be produced, in some cases, without contact, and merely by *willing* that the beginner should write. The confidence of the hypnotist in his own power must, however, play a principal part in producing such one who doubted his own power would produce little or no effect.

The help of an experienced guide is also useful in making the beginner observe various useful little precautions, and in giving him an idea of the sort of questions that we may put to spirits and the manner of putting them.

207. Beginners may also be greatly assisted in developing their psychic abilities by attending meetings of several people all animated with the same desire and the same intentions. At these meetings, all the beginners should try to write simultaneously, in perfect silence, and with religious quietude; and each of them, in the meantime should invoke the aid of his guardian angel, or of some advanced spirit whom he knows to be sympathetic to himself. At the opening of such a meeting, one of the assembly will do well to make a general appeal, to all good spirits, on behalf of all the members of the circle, without any special designation, saying, for example "*In the name of Almighty God, we beg that good spirits will kindly communicate through the people here assembled*." It is rare, under these circumstances, that, among the number assembled, there are not some who soon begin to write, or give some other sign of mediumship.

What occurs under such circumstances is easily explained. The people thus united by a common intention form a *collective body*, the power and sensitiveness of each member of which are increased by the magnetic influence exerted by all the members on one another, and which aids their development. Among the spirits attracted by this community of wills, there are almost always some who, among the people thus assembled, discover a medium suitable for their purpose, and take advantage of this discovery to enter into relation with him.

This method is especially useful among groups of spiritists who have no mediums, or who have not a sufficient number of them.

208. Means of developing mediums have been sought for, just as signs of the presence of psychic ability have been sought for; but up to the present time, we know of none more efficacious than those just indicated. Some people, persuaded that the obstacle to the development of mediumship is usually some resistance of the corporeal organism, have endeavored to vanquish this supposed resistance by gymnastic exercises that almost dislocate the arm and the hand We do not describe this method of

procedure, which comes from the other side of the Atlantic, not only because we have no proof whatever of its efficacy, but also because we are convinced that, on the contrary, it might often prove dangerous, through the violence thus done to the nervous system. Where the rudiments of psychic ability do not exist, nothing can produce them, not even electricity, which has been employed for that purpose, it need hardly be added, without success.

209. Belief in the possibility of communication with spirits is not an indispensable preliminary to the development of mediumship, although it usually renders that development more easy and rapid. A sincere desire for truth, and a kind disposition, are the conditions most conducive to success, provided the germ of the gift be present.

We have seen people who were utterly incredulous write on first holding a pencil; while fervent believers, not possessing the germ of psychic ability, have failed to do so in spite of protracted efforts on their part, which proves that the ability depends on the organism.

210. The first indication of the possession of the gift of writing under spirit dictation is usually a sort of shuddering in the arm and hand; little by little, the hand is moved, as though writing, by an impulsion which it is unable to control. It often happens that, at first, only a few strokes are made; letters are then gradually formed, and words begin to appear; and at length the writing is produced with the rapidity and clearness of a running hand. In every case, the hand must be abandoned entirely to the extraneous impulsion which is acting upon it, and which should neither be resisted nor assisted.

Some mediums write quickly and easily from the beginning, and even, as just remarked, on their very first attempt; but this is comparatively rare: others are long in getting beyond strokes and pot-books. Spirits tell us that a long course of training is needed, in the latter case, to bring the hand of the medium under their control. When these exercises are unduly prolonged or degenerate into ridiculous scribbling, the medium may be sure that some spiteful or mocking spirit is amusing himself at his expense, for good spirits never cause any waste of labor; in such cases, he should appeal with increased fervor to his guardian angel, in order to attract the good influences that will help him to get rid of the persecution. If; despite these efforts, no improvement takes place, he should cease to hold the pencil. The attempt may be renewed every day; but it is well to stop whenever anything equivocal occurs, in order to give a summary check to the satisfaction of the frivolous or hostile spirits who are so apt to interfere with beginners.

To these remarks a spirit adds the following: “You should also state that there are mediums who cannot get beyond strokes and pot-hooks. If; after some months of trying, a medium obtains nothing more significant than these, than letters strung together without meaning, or than a mere “yes” or “no”, it is useless to persist in spoiling paper to no purpose; they are mediums, it is true, but *unproductive mediums*.

And, in all cases, the first communications obtained should only be considered as exercises that the medium has been made to go through with by secondary spirits; for which reason, but slight importance should be attached to them, the spirits employed for such work being, so to say, mere writing masters, who are set, by higher spirits, to get the medium's hand into train. For you must not suppose that such preparatory exercises are ever conducted by elevated spirits and there is always danger that, if the medium is not animated by a serious purpose, the spirits of lower degree who are thus employed about him may remain with him and attach themselves to him. Almost all mediums have passed through this phase of trial in the course of their development; it is for them to win for themselves the sympathy of spirits of a higher order, who may gradually take the place of the others."

211. The great stumbling block of the majority of beginners is, in fact, their liability to be drawn in to hold converse with inferior spirits; and they may usually consider themselves fortunate, if they only come into contact with spirits who are merely frivolous, and not positively wicked. They should do their utmost to prevent all such spirits from obtaining influence over them, for, when once they have been allowed to get hold of a medium, it is not always easy to get rid of them. It is impossible to insist too strongly on the importance of such precaution, especially in the beginning; for, without it, the finest psychic abilities may be thrown away.

The first thing to be done by a medium is to place himself, with sincere and reverent faith, under the protection of the Almighty, and to ask earnestly for the assistance of his guardian angel, who is always a spirit of superior moral and intellectual advancement, whereas his "familiar spirits," sympathizing with his good or bad qualities, as the case may be, are often frivolous, or even wicked.

The second thing to be done by a medium is to ascertain, with scrupulous care, by means of all the indications furnished us by experience, the character of the spirits that first come to him, and in regard to whom it is always well for him to be on his guard. Whenever he detects any suspicious symptom, he must instantly appeal for help to his guardian angel, repel the inferior spirit with all his might, and discourage him by showing him that he is not to be taken in by him. A preliminary study of the Spiritist theory is indispensable to all who would avoid the annoyances inseparable from inexperience. As full instructions on this subject will be given in Chapters 23 and 24 (*Obsession*, and *Identify of Spirits*), we will only remark, in this place, that the inferiority of spirits is proved, not only by their language, but also by every useless or puerile sign, figure, or emblem, by all eccentricities in their style of writing, whether by writing too large, or by any other absurd or unusual peculiarity. Automatic writing may be very ill executed, or even difficult to read, and yet not be due to the influence of an evil spirit, for these defects may be due to the want of manual skill or flexibility on the part of the medium; it is not the badness of the writing, but its eccentricity,

that should excite suspicion. We have seen mediums so befooled, that they actually measured the superiority of the spirits who wrote by them *by the size of their writing*; while others attached the greatest importance to the communications obtained by them because conveyed in the form of printed letters! It cannot be too distinctly borne in mind that puerilities, of whatever kind, are incompatible with real superiority, on the part of spirits, as on that of men.

212. If it is important to avoid being brought unwittingly under the domination of inferior spirits, it is of still more importance not to put ourselves voluntarily into their power; and consequently, no one should allow himself to be led, by an immoderate desire to write, to submit himself to the influence of the first spirit who may come to him, under the impression that, if he does not suit, it will be easy to get rid of him. We can neither ask, nor accept, the smallest help from a bad spirit, with impunity; for such a one may exact heavy payment for his services.

We have seen instances in which people, impatient to become mediums, have accepted the proffered assistance of spirits whom they knew to be bad, with the idea of dispensing with their services when they should have done with them, and who have had their wishes gratified by finding themselves able to write at once; but the spirits thus enlisted in their attempt, not feeling flattered at being taken merely as momentary coadjutors, have proved to be less docile in going than they had been in coming. We know of cases of this kind in which people have been punished, for their presumption in believing themselves to be strong enough to get rid of such allies through an exertion of their will, by years of obsession of every sort, by the most ridiculous hoaxes, by tenacious fascination, and even by the heaviest worldly misfortunes and disappointments. It sometimes happens that a spirit, after showing himself; at first, to be openly wicked, behaves hypocritically and pretends to have reformed, or declares himself to be under the power of the very medium he is subjugating, in order to make the latter fancy that he can drive him away whenever he chooses to do so.

213. Automatic writing is sometimes perfectly legible; but it is sometimes so ill done as to be illegible by anyone but the writer himself Mediums should therefore endeavor, from the first, to write legibly. Spirits are not always economical in the use of writing paper, and sometimes make their mediums write larger than need be. When the writing is difficult to make out, the spirit must be politely requested to write it over again, which he is generally willing to do. Writing that is habitually illegible, even for the medium, can usually be made clearer by frequent and careful exercise, and by constantly urging the spirit to write more plainly. Spirits often adopt the conventional signs in use at the sittings they attend. For instance, when a spirit wishes to show that a question displeases him, and that he does not choose to answer it, he will often draw a long stroke, or employ some equivalent sign.

When a spirit has said what he has to say, or does not intend to say any thing more, the medium’s hand remains still, and no amount of desire or

effort on his part can obtain any further movement. On the contrary, so long as the spirit has not said his say, the pencil goes on writing, without it's being, in some cases, possible for the medium to arrest the movement of his hand. If a spirit wishes to say something spontaneously, the medium's hand seizes the pencil convulsively and writes, without the medium being able to avoid it. On the other hand, the medium almost always feels something in himself that shows him whether a pause in the writing is merely temporary, or whether the spirit has finished his communication. In the same way, the medium rarely fails to know when the communicating spirit has departed. Such are the principal explanations we have to give in regard to the development of psychography; experience will teach various other practical details on which it is needless to enter here, and in regard to which each beginner will be able to guide himself; with the aid of the general principles we have now laid down. Let people try; and it will be found that many more are mediums than is generally supposed.

214. What we have now said applies to *mechanical writing*, the object which all mediums desire to attain, and rightly so; but purely mechanical mediumship is exceedingly rare, more or less of *intuition* on the part of the medium being usually mingled with it. When a medium has a perception of what he is writing, he is naturally apt to doubt the reality of his phenomena for he does not know whether the writing comes from subconscious or from a spirit. But he need not be uneasy on this account, and should go on, despite his doubts. Let him carefully note what he has written, and he will see that it contains a vast number of things which were not in his mind, and some that are even contrary to his own thoughts and opinions; an evident proof that they could not have proceeded from himself. Let him go on; his doubts of himself will be dispelled by experience.

215. If the medium is not exclusively mechanical by nature, all his endeavors to become such will be useless, but he would be wrong to consider this as a misfortune.

If he is endowed with intuitive mediumship only, let him be contented therewith; it will be of great service to him, if wisely used.

If no involuntary movement of the hand should occur after long-continued attempts, or if the movements are too slight to produce any results worth having, the beginner should adopt the plan of writing down the first thought that suggests itself to his mind, when holding the pencil, without troubling himself as to whether it be his own, or whether it comes to him from some other source; experience will teach him how to distinguish between his own thoughts and those which are suggested to him. Mechanical handwriting is often developed, ultimately, by the adoption of this plan.

We remarked above that it does not matter, in some cases, whether a thought is the medium's own, or whether it comes from some other spirit. This is especially the case when an intuitive or inspirational medium is writing a work of imagination; tinder such circumstances, it is evidently of no importance whether he has produced a thought from his own mind, or

assimilated one that has been suggested to him; if he gets a good idea, let him thank his good genius “for it, and he will have other ideas suggested to him. This is what constitutes the “inspiration” of poets, philosophers, and scientific discoverers.

216. Let us now go on to consider psychic ability when fully developed; let us suppose the case of a medium who writes easily, and is able to enter freely into communication with various spirits. Arrived at this point of development, he would make a great mistake if he supposed himself to be able, on that account, to dispense with all further enlightenment; for he has only vanquished the physical obstacles to mediumship, and is, in fact, just entering upon the real difficulties of mediumship. It is now, when he is just entering on the work of mediumship, that he most requires the counsels of prudence and experience, in order to escape the innumerable snares that are laid for him by the spirits about him. A medium who is too confident in the strength of his wings, too ambitious of flying alone, will soon find them smeared with the bird-lime of untruthful spirits, always on the watch to entrap the vain and the presumptuous.

217. When a medium’s ability is developed, it must not be unduly or unwisely exercised. The pleasure it gives to beginners sometimes excites in them an enthusiasm that needs to be moderated; they should remember that psychic ability is always given for sober use, never for the satisfaction of idle curiosity. Mediums should therefore only use their gift under the most favorable conditions, and not all day long; for, good spirits not being constantly at their orders, they run the risk, by unduly prolonging the exercise of their mediumship, of becoming the dupes of inferior ones. It is well to have fixed days and hours for psychic purposes; both because the medium then brings a more concentrated purpose to his work, and also because the spirits who may wish to communicate through him, being thus notified and invited beforehand, are much more likely to be present.

218. As previously remarked, if; in spite of repeated trials, psychic ability does not reveal itself in any way, the attempt must be given up, as the attempt to sing has to be given up by pupils who prove to have no voice. He who does not understand a given language employs a translator; those whose organism does not allow of their becoming mediums must follow that example, and have recourse to one who is a medium. But, even though you should fail to find a medium, you must not imagine that you are left with out the help of spirit-friends. Mediumship is a means whereby spirits are enabled to express themselves to men; but it has nothing to do with attracting them to us. Those who hold us in affection come to us as well without mediums as with them. A father does not abandon his child because he is deaf, dumb, and blind, but tends him nonetheless carefully and lovingly, though not perceived by the child. Our spirit-friends do the same by us; they are always about us, and, if they cannot transmit their thoughts to us ostensibly, they do so by inspiration.

Change of Handwriting.

219. A very common occurrence with writing mediums is the change which takes place in their handwriting, according to the spirits who communicate; and what is still more remarkable, the same writing, which is often identical with the writing of the spirit while in the flesh, is reproduced whenever the same spirit communicates. This change of writing only occurs with mechanical and semi mechanical mediums, because, in their case, the movement of the hand is involuntary and directed by the communicating spirit; it does not occur with merely intuitive mediums, because, in their case, the spirit acts only upon their thought, and their hand is directed by their own will, as in ordinary writing. But the non-occurrence of change in the character of the writing, even in the case of the mechanical medium, proves nothing against the reality of his ability; such changes not being, by any means, a necessary condition of spirit-manifestation, but merely the result of a special physical aptitude with which even the most purely mechanical writer is not always endowed (See *Polygraphic Mediums*, 199).

Loss and Suspension of Mediumship.

220. Psychic ability is subject to intermittence and temporary suspension, both as regards writing and all other modes of spirit-manifestation. In regard to this subject the questions addressed by us to spirits have elicited the following replies:

(1) Can psychic ability be lost?

“That often happens, but the interruption is more frequently of short duration, and ceases with the cause that produced it.”

(2) Is that cause the exhaustion of the medium’s fluid?

“Whatever the ability possessed by a medium, he can do nothing without the sympathetic concurrence of’ spirits; when he obtains nothing, it is not always his ability that is at fault, for it often happens that spirits will not, or cannot, make use of him.”

(3) What are the causes that lead spirits to abandon a medium?

“Good spirits are mainly influenced, in regard to a medium, by the use he makes of his gift. We abandon the medium who uses his gift thoughtlessly, or for the furtherance of ambitious designs, or if he refuses to use his gift to help those who seek his aid, or who need to witness our manifestations in order to acquire conviction. God has not granted this gift to a medium merely for his own pleasure, and, still less, to serve his ambitions, but as a means of aiding his own advancement and that of his fellow men. If a spirit sees that a medium no longer serves his intentions, and does not profit by his instructions and advice, he withdraws from him, and seeks someone more worthy of his assistance.”

(4) Is not the place of the spirit who withdraws often filled by another? And, if so, how are we to understand the suspension of the medium’s ability?

“There is no lack of spirits who ask nothing better than to communicate, and who are quite ready to take the place of those who withdraw; but, when the spirit who leaves a medium is a good one, he sometimes quits him only for a moment, depriving him, for a certain time, of all communication, in order to give him a lesson, and to show him that his gift does not depend on himself; and should not be regarded by him as a thing to be vain of. This temporary powerlessness also serves to prove to the medium that he writes under an influence foreign to himself, as if it were otherwise, there would be no discontinuance of the impulsion.

“But this suspension of psychic ability is not always a punishment; it is sometimes due to the spirit’s solicitude for the health of his medium, to whom he wishes to give a rest that he sees to be necessary to his physical well-being; and, when this is the case, he allows no other spirits to take his place.”

(5) Nevertheless, we sometimes see mediums of great moral worth, and who are in no need of rest, abandoned by their spirit-friends, and much distressed by these suspensions of their ability, which they are quite unable to account for?

“In such cases, the suspension occurs as a trial of their patience and constancy; it is for the same reason that spirits rarely assign any fixed time for the duration of such interruptions of mediumship. Such suspensions, moreover, are sometimes useful by giving the medium time for thinking over the communications already made to him. It is by the use a medium makes of our instructions that we recognize those who are really worthy of our assistance; we cannot regard as such the experimenters who regard our manifestations only as an amusing curiosity.”

(6) In such a case, should the medium still endeavor to write?

“Yes, if the spirit advises him to do so; but if he tells him to abstain, he should cease the attempt, until some sign from the spirit announces the end of the suspension.

(7) Is there any way of abridging such a trial?

“Resignation and prayer are the only means to which you can resort under such circumstances. All you can do is to make the attempt each day, but only for a few minutes at a time, as it would be unwise to lose time and strength In fruitless efforts.

The attempt should be made simply with a view to ascertaining whether the ability is recovered or not.”

(8) The suspension of psychic ability does not, then, always imply the withdrawal of the spirits who habitually communicate with the medium?

“The medium is in the position of one who is suffering from an attack of blindness, but who is none the less surrounded by his friends, although he does not see them. The medium therefore can, and should, continue to communicate *by thought* with his familiar spirits, and may feel assured that he is heard by them. The loss of mediumship deprives the medium of

ostensible communication with his spirit friends, but it cannot deprive him of mental communication with them."

(9) The interruption of psychic ability, then, does not necessarily imply displeasure on the part of the spirits who usually communicate through a medium?

"By no means, for, on the contrary, it may be a proof of their consideration and kindness for him."

(10) How can we find out when such interruptions are caused by their displeasure?

"Let the medium examine his conscience; let him ask himself what use he has made of his gift, what good others have derived from it, *what profit he himself has derived from the counsels he has received from his spirit friends*, and he will hardly have much difficulty in ascertaining that point."

(11) When the medium finds himself unable to write, may he not have recourse to some other medium?

"That depends on the cause of the interruption. A spirit, after having given you counsel, often leaves you for some time without communications, in order that you may not get into the habit of consulting us incessantly, and especially In regard to the details of your earthly life; when we have left a medium on this account, he will get nothing satisfactory through the aid of any other medium. And these suspensions are sometimes intended to subserve yet another end, *viz.*, to prove to you that spirits are free agents, and are not to be made to come at your beck and call; and for the same reason, those who are not mediums, do not always succeed in learning all that they desire to know."

(12) To what end has Providence endowed certain individuals with special psychic abilities?

"Mediumship is a mission, and should always be exercised as such. Mediums are the interpreters between spirits and men."

(13) But there are some mediums who only use their abilities with reluctance?

"They are imperfect mediums; they know not the worth of the favor accorded them."

(14) If mediumship is a mission, why is it not the exclusive privilege of good men, and why is this ability so often possessed by people who are far from reputable, and who make bad use of it?

"It is given to them precisely because they need it for their own improvement, and in order that they may be open to good counsels; if they do not profit by the gift, they must bear the consequences of their unfaithfulness. Did not Jesus address his teaching specially to sinners?"

(15) When those who have an earnest desire to write as mediums, find themselves unable to do so, should they conclude that there is a want of kindly feeling towards them on the part of spirits?

“No, for this ability may be lacking, just as may be that of poetry or of music; but the lack of this ability may be compensated by the possession of some other one, equally valuable.”

(16) How is a man to benefit by the teaching of spirits, if he has not the means, either of himself or through other mediums, of receiving this teaching directly

“Has he not books, as the Christian has the Gospel? In order to practice the morality taught by Jesus, it is not necessary for the Christian to have actually heard Him utter the words in which He embodied it.”

CHAPTER 18

Difficulties and Dangers of Mediumship

Difficulties and dangers of Mediumship – Influence of Mediumship on the health, on the brain, and on children.

221.

(1) Is psychic ability an indication of a morbid state of health, or is it simply abnormal?

“It is sometimes abnormal, but not morbid. Some mediums are very robust; those who are weakly are so from other causes.”

(2) Does the use of mediumship cause fatigue?

“A too prolonged exercise of any kind causes fatigue it is the same with mediumship, especially when employed for the obtaining of physical manifestations, which necessarily occasions fatigue, because it is a loss of fluid that is only to be restored by rest.”

(3) Is the proper exercise of mediumship (we do not speak of its abuse), injurious to health?

“There are cases in which the physical or moral state of a medium may render it prudent, or even necessary, to abstain from exercising it, or, at least, to exercise it with great moderation. A medium is generally warned, when this is the case, by his own feeling; and he should always abstain from using his mediumship when he is Conscious of fatigue in so doing.”

(4) Is the exercise of mediumship more likely to be injurious to some people than to others?”

“I have already said that this depends upon the physical and moral state of the medium. There are people whose temperament renders it necessary to avoid all causes of over-excitement; and mediumship may be of the number (188, 194).

(5) Can the exercise of mediumship produce madness?

“No more than anything else may produce it, when there is a predisposition to brain disease. Mediumship will not produce madness, where the germ of madness does not exist; but, where that germ exists (which is easily known), commonsense should suffice to show you the necessity of avoiding every kind of mental excitement.”

(6) Is it unwise to develop psychic abilities in children?

“It is not only unwise, but very dangerous to do so: for the frail and delicate organization of childhood would be too much shaken, and the youthful imagination too much excited, by such attempts; parents should therefore keep these ideas from their children, or, at least, should only speak of them in reference to their moral aspect.”

(7) Yet there are children who are mediums by nature, not only for physical manifestations, but also for writing and for visions; is there danger for such as these?

“No; where a child’s ability is spontaneous, it belongs to his temperament, and his constitution is prepared for its exercise; it is a very different thing when you attempt to develop mediumship artificially, and thus subject the child’s nervous system to over excitement. It is also to be remarked that a child who is naturally subject to visions is generally but little impressed by them; they appear so natural to such a child, that he pays but little heed to them and easily forgets them; and in after-years, if these visions recur to his memory, he is not apt to be painfully affected by the remembrance of them.”
(8) At what age may we attempt to develop psychic abilities without danger?
“There is no rule in regard to age; it depends partly on the physical, and still more on the moral, development of the individual; there are children of; say, a dozen years of age, who would be less affected by the attempt than many grown people. I am now speaking of mediumship in general; but physical mediumship is that which is most likely to cause fatigue to the organism. Writing, however, in the case of a child, has another danger, owing to his inexperience, *viz.*, the mischief which might result to his health, if he took to writing when alone, and should thus make an amusement of it.”
222. Practical spiritism, as we shall see more clearly the more we know of it, demands our utmost tact and discretion to avoid being taken in by deceitful spirits; if grown people are in danger of being deceived by these, children and young people are evidently, on account of their inexperience, still more exposed to this danger. We know, too, that concentration of thought and feeling is absolutely necessary for obtaining the concentration of serious and benevolent spirits. An evocation made rightly and jokingly is a profanation which gives easy access to mocking and maleficent spirits; and as we cannot expect a child to possess the seriousness necessary for such an act, it is to be feared that he would make a mere amusement of it if left to himself.
Even under the most favorable conditions, it is highly desirable that a child who is endowed with psychic ability should only exercise it under the eyes of experienced people, who may inspire him, by their example, with the sentiment of respect that should always preside at the evocation of souls who have left the earthly life. The question of age, as I have said, is subordinate to conditions of temperament as well as of character; and you should not only avoid forcing the development of this ability in children, where it is not spontaneous, but its exercise, in every case, should be conducted with very great circumspection, and should neither be excited nor encouraged even on the part of grown people, if they are weak in body or in mind.
Those who show the slightest symptoms of mental eccentricity or weakness should be dissuaded from its exercise by every possible means; for there is, in such people, an evident predisposition to insanity, which any and every species of excitement would tend to develop. spiritist ideas are not more

likely to produce cerebral excitement than any others; but madness brought on by spiritist ideas would take its character from them, just as it would assume the character of religious mania, if it had been brought on by the excitement attendant on an excess of devotional practices, and spiritism, in such cases, would naturally, though unjustly, be held responsible for that result. The best thing to be done, with everyone who shows a tendency to fall under the influence of a fixed idea, is to direct his attention to something altogether different from that idea, so as to give rest to the organs which are the seat of the excitement (See *Introduction* to *The Spirits' Book*, Par. 12)

CHAPTER 19

The Role of the Medium in Spirit Communication

MANIFESTATIONS – Influence of the Medium – Mediumship attributed to inert bodies – Aptitude of certain Mediums for languages, music, drawing, etc., of which they have no present knowledge – Dissertation of a spirit on the action of mediums in spirit-manifestation.

223.

(1) Is the medium, at the time he is exercising his ability, in a perfectly normal state?

"He is sometimes in a state of crisis, more or less decided; it is this which fatigues him, and makes him need rest. But, more frequently, he is in his normal state; especially if he is only a medium for writing."

(2) Can written or verbal communications be given, psychically, by the spirit of the medium himself?

"The soul of the medium may communicate like any other; if it attains a certain degree of liberty, it recovers its qualities as a spirit. You have a proof of this in the souls of living people who come to visit you and communicate with you by writing or otherwise, even, in some cases, without your calling them. Among the spirits whom you evoke, some are reincarnated, in this world or in other worlds; in such cases *they speak to you as spirits, and not as men*. Why may it not be the same with the spirit of a medium?"

– Does not your explanation confirm the opinion of those who believe that all communications emanate from the spirit of the medium, and not from other spirits?

"That opinion is only wrong because held too exclusively.

It is certain that the spirit of the medium can act of itself; but that is no reason why others should not act also by his means."

(3) How are we to know whether the spirit who communicates is that of the medium, or some other?

"By the nature of the communication. Study the circumstances of the case, and the language employed; and you will learn to distinguish. It is chiefly in somnambulism or trance that the spirit of the medium manifests himself, because he is then in a state of greater freedom; it is more difficult for the medium's spirit to manifest himself; 50 to say, apart from his human personality, when he is in the normal state.

Besides, mediums often reply to questions by answers which you cannot possibly attribute to the mediums themselves; and I therefore say to you, *observe* and *reflect*."

Remark – When a human being speaks to us, we have no difficulty in deciding whether what he says comes from himself or whether he is expressing the ideas of another; it is the same in regard to mediums.

(4) Since the spirit of the medium may have acquired, in anterior existences, knowledge which he has temporarily lost sight of; under his present corporeal envelope, but which he remembers as a spirit, may it not be that he derives, from the recesses of his own nature, the ideas which appear to exceed the limits of his understanding?

"That often happens in somnambulic situations and in trance; but I would again remind you that there are manifestations which exclude all doubt in regard to the fact of our intervention. Continue your observation for a sufficient length of time, meditate on what you see, and you can have no doubt upon this subject."

(5) Are the communications which emanate from the medium's own spirit always inferior to those given by other spirits?

"Not always; for other spirits may be of an order inferior to that of the medium, and may therefore make communications of less value than those given by the latter.

This is often seen in somnambulism, in which state it is usually the sleepwalker's own spirit who manifests; and yet very good things are often said by sleepwalkers."

(6) When a spirit communicates through a medium, does he transmit his thought directly, or does he use the incarnated spirit of the medium as his intermediary?

"The medium's spirit acts as the interpreter of the communicating spirit, because he is linked with the body, which, in such cases, plays the part of speaker, and also because there must be a conductor between you and the disincarnate spirits who communicate with you, just as, for the transmission of a telegraphic message, there must be a wire connecting the points of transmission and of reception, and, at the ends of the wire, an intelligent person who transmits, and another who receives, the message conveyed by the electric fluid."

(7) Does the spirit of the medium exercise an influence over the communications, which he transmits, from other spirits?

"Yes. If he is not in sympathy with them, he may alter their replies and assimilate them to his own ideas and propensities; *but he does not influence the spirits themselves*: he is only an inexact interpreter."

(8) Is it for this reason that certain spirits have a preference for certain mediums?

"Yes. Spirits seek for interpreters in sympathy with themselves, and able to transmit their thought correctly. When there is no sympathy between them, the spirit of the medium becomes an antagonist and produces resistance; he is an unwilling interpreter, and, as such, is often an unfaithful one. The same thing occurs among yourselves, when a message is conveyed through a careless, hostile, or unfaithful messenger."

(9) We see that such may be the case with intuitive mediums, but we do not see how it can be so with mechanical mediums.

"You do not rightly understand the part that is played by a medium. There is, in this matter, the action of a law which you have not yet discovered. You must remember that, in order to effect the movement of an inert body, the spirit requires a certain quantity of animalized fluid which he borrows from the medium, for the purpose of lending a momentary vitality to the material object he wishes to make use of; and which he thus renders momentarily obedient to his will. In the same way, in order to transmit an intelligent communication, he must have an intelligent intermediary, and this intermediary is furnished him by the spirit of the medium."

– This explanation appears to be hardly applicable to what are called "talking tables," for it would seem to imply that, when *inert objects*, such as tables, planchettes, etc., give intelligent answers, the spirit of the medium is a mere cipher.

"Such an inference would be erroneous. A disincarnate spirit can lend a momentary, factitious life to an inert body, but it cannot give it intelligence; no inert body was ever intelligent. It is therefore the spirit of the medium that receives the thought, without being aware of it, and transmits it by successive steps through various intermediaries."

(10) It would seem from these explanations, that the spirit of the medium is never completely passive?

"He is passive when he does not mingle his own ideas with those of the communicating spirit, but he is never an absolute nullity his cooperation as an intermediary is always necessary, even in what you call mechanical mediumship."

(11) Is there not a greater probability of the spirit's thought being correctly transmitted by a mechanical medium than by an intuitive one?

"Undoubtedly there is; and, therefore, for some kinds of communications, a mechanical medium is to be preferred; but when you are sure of the genuineness of the ability of an intuitive medium, it is of little importance. Everything in this matter depends upon circumstances; what I wish to impress on your mind is the fact that less precision is necessary in some sorts of communications than in others."

(12) Among the different explanations put forth in regard to spirit-phenomena, there is one which attributes mediumship to inert bodies, to the planchette, for example, which serves as the instrument for writing; the communicating spirit being supposed to identify himself for the time being with the object employed by him for transmitting his message, and thus to render it momentarily, not only *alive*, but *intelligent*. Hence the term *inert mediums*, given by those who hold this view of the subject, to the inert objects employed by spirits in manifesting themselves. What do you say to this hypothesis?

"There is but one thing to be said about it, *viz.*, that if the communicating spirit transmitted *intelligence* to the planchette as well as *life*, the

planchette would be able to write of itself without the cooperation of the medium. For an inert body to become intelligent would be as impossible, in the nature of things, as it would be for an intelligent being – a *man* – to become a machine. Such a supposition is only one of the fancies that are engendered by preconceived ideas, and are dissipated by experience and observation."

(13) Yet a well-known phenomenon seems to confirm the opinion that there is, in the inert bodies thus temporarily vitalized, something more than mere vitality, something that looks like a kind of intelligence; for the inert bodies thus vitalized by the spirit's will frequently appear, by their movements, to express anger, affection, and various other sentiments.

"When an angry man shakes a stick, the stick is not angry, nor is the hand angry that holds the stick; it is the thought which directs the hand that is angry. The table, or planchette, is no more intelligent than is the stick; they obey an intelligence, but they have neither intelligence nor sentiment. In short, a spirit does not transform himself into a table or a planchette, nor does he even enter into them."

(14) If it is irrational to attribute intelligence to the objects in question, may they nevertheless be considered as a variety of mediums, designated by the term, *inert mediums*?

"Such a question is one of words, and has little interest for us, provided you yourselves understand the meaning you attribute to it. You are quite at liberty, if it pleases you, to call *puppet* a *man*."

(15) Spirits possess only the language of thought; they have no articulate language; and accordingly, for them, there is but one language. This being the case, could a spirit express himself through psychic agency, in a tongue which he has never spoken when in the flesh; and if so, where would he derive the words which, in such a case, would be employed by him?

"You answer your own question when you say that spirits have but one language, *viz.*, the language of thought; for that language is understood by all intelligences, by men as well as by spirits. The errant spirit, in addressing himself to the incarnate spirit of the medium, speaks to him neither in French nor in English, but in the *universal language*, which is *that of though't*; in order to translate his ideas into an articulate tongue, and to transmit them in that tongue to you, he obtains the words he needs from the vocabulary of the medium's brain."

(16) If this were the case, the spirit should be able to express himself only in the language of the medium; yet we have communications written or spoken in languages unknown to the medium; is there not a contradiction in this?

"You must remark, first, that all mediums are not equally fit for this sort of exercise and, next, that spirits only lend themselves occasionally to this sort of effort, when they judge it to be useful. In ordinary communications they prefer to employ the native language of the medium, because, in doing so, they have less of physical difficulty to overcome."

(17) Does not the aptitude of certain mediums, who write or speak in a foreign language, result from the fact that this language is one which has been familiar to them in a previous existence, and the intuition of which they have preserved?
“That is sometimes the case, but it is not a rule; for the spirit can, in some cases, and by an extra effort, surmount the physical resistance which he encounters. This occurs when a medium writes, in his own tongue, words which he does not understand.”
(18) Can one who, in his normal state, is ignorant of the art of writing, write as a medium?
“Yes; but it is evident that, in such a case, the communicating spirit has a greater mechanical difficulty to overcome, because the medium’s hand is unaccustomed to the movements necessary for the tracing of letters. It is the same with drawing mediums who, in their ordinary state, do not know how to draw.”
(19) Can an unintelligent medium be used for transmitting communications of a high order?
“Yes; just as a medium can be made to write or speak in a language that he does not understand. Mediumship, properly speaking, is independent of the intelligence as well as of the moral qualities; and, when no better instrument is at hand, a spirit does the best he can with the one he finds within his reach. But it is natural that; for communications of importance, he should prefer the medium who presents the fewest physical obstacles to his action. Moreover, an idiot is often only such through the imperfection of his organs, and his spirit may be far more advanced than you suppose it to be; a fact shown by evocations that have been made of idiots, both dead and living.”
Remark – We have several times evoked idiots in the flesh, who have given indisputable proofs of their identity, and who have nevertheless given very sensible and even intelligent answers. Idiocy is a punishment for the spirit thus incarnated, and who suffers from the restraint imposed on him by an imperfect corporeal organization. An idiot may therefore offer, as a medium, greater facilities for spirit communication than could be supposed by those who are unaware of the fact of reincarnation. (See the *Revue Spirite*, July, 1860, *Phrenology and Physiognomy*)
(20) Where comes the aptness of certain mediums for writing verses, notwithstanding their ignorance of the rules of versification?
“Poetry is a language; mediums may be made to write in verse as they may be made to write in any other language that is not known to them. Besides, they may have been poets in a previous existence, and, as you have already been told, knowledge when once acquired is never lost by a spirit, who is destined to attain to every species of perfection. What they have formerly known gives to incarnate spirits, when acted upon by us, various facilities which they do not possess in their ordinary state.”

(21 Is it the same with mediums who have a special aptitude for drawing, music, etc?
“Yes; for drawing and music may be considered as languages, since they are ways of expressing thought: spirits make use, among the instruments furnished by the aptitudes of a medium, of the one which offers them the greatest facility.”
(22) Does the expression of thought through poetry, drawing, or music, depend on the special aptitude of the medium, or on that of the communicating spirit?
“Sometimes on that of the medium, sometimes on that of the spirit. Superior spirits possess all aptitudes; inferior spirits have only a narrow range of knowledge and of power.”
(23) How is it that a man, who has possessed transcendent talent in a former existence, no longer possesses it in a subsequent one?
“Such is not always the case, for, on the contrary, it often happens that a man perfects, in a new corporeal existence, what he had commenced in a previous one; but a transcendent ability is often purposely allowed to slumber for a time, in order to leave to its possessor greater freedom for developing, in a given incarnation, some other ability. The ability allowed to lay dormant remains with him as a latent germ, which will spring up again at a later period, but, of which, meantime, some traces usually remain with him, if only as a vague intuition.”
224. The disincarnate spirit undoubtedly comprehends all languages, because all languages are the expression of thought, and *it is thought* that a spirit comprehends; but, in order for him to transmit thought, an instrument is indispensable: the medium is that instrument. The soul of the medium, which receives the communication of the disincarnate spirit, can only transmit that communication through his bodily organs; and those organs cannot be so flexible to an unknown tongue as to the tongue with which he is at present familiar. A medium, who understands only his native tongue, may, occasionally, be made to reply in some other tongue, if it pleases the communicating spirit to perform that feat; but spirits, who find human language too slow for their rapidity of thought, and who abridge that language as much as possible, chafe under the mechanical resistance which they encounter in their mediums, and therefore do not always give themselves the trouble to speak in the language that may be desired by us. For the same reason, a medium, during his novitiate, writing slowly, and with difficulty, even in his native tongue, generally obtains only short and simple answers; the spirits themselves recommending questioners to put only very simple questions when they employ the mediumship of a beginner. For the treatment of questions of high import, spirits require a fully developed medium, presenting no mechanical obstacle to their action. An author does not employ, as his amanuensis, a child who is only learning to spell. A good workman does not like to work with ill-made or unsuitable tools.

To sum up the foregoing statements: With few exceptions, a medium transmits the thought of the communicating spirit by such mechanical means as are at his disposal, and the expression of the thought thus transmitted is necessarily, in most cases, more or less impaired by the imperfection of those means; for which reason the uncultured medium, though he may be made to transmit the grandest, sublime, most philosophical thoughts, will usually do so in language reflecting his lack of culture.

This fact furnishes an answer to the objection sometimes brought against spirit-messages, on the score of the incorrectness of style and orthography observable in some of them, but which proceed as often from the medium as from the spirit. It is puerile to attach undue importance to trifling and superficial imperfections of this kind, and no less puerile to take pains to reproduce such inaccuracies with minute exactness, as we have sometimes seen done, under the impression that, coming from a spirit, they ought to be respected. Such inaccuracies of diction may therefore be corrected without scruple; those, at all events, which do not mark, on the part of the communicating spirit, some distinguishing characteristic that it may be useful to preserve as a proof of identity. For instance, we have seen a spirit constantly write the name *James* as *Jame* (without the *s*) when speaking to his grandson, because he had been in the habit of writing it thus during his earthly life, although the latter, who was his medium, knew perfectly well how to write his own name.

225. The following dissertation, dictated spontaneously by a disincarnate intelligence, who has constantly shown his superiority by the excellence of his communications, gives a clear and complete summary of the explanations hitherto made, by our friends in the other life, in regard to the part performed by the medium in the work of spirit manifestation.

“Whatever may be the specialty of writing mediums – whether mechanical, semi-mechanical, or merely intuitive – our mode of communicating through them does not essentially vary. In point of fact, we communicate with incarnate spirits, just as we do with disincarnate ones; that is to say, *solely by the radiation of our thoughts*.

“Our thoughts have no need to be clothed in words in order to be understood by spirits, for all spirits *perceive* the thought which we desire to communicate, through the mere direction of that thought towards them, and they perceive it in the ratio of the development of their own intellectual abilities; that is to say, such and such a thought will be understood by such and such spirits, because their own advancement enables them to understand it, while that same thought will not be perceived by other spirits, because it awakens no remembrance, no answering consciousness, in their feeling or their mind, and is therefore not perceptible by them. This being the case, an incarnate spirit, even if of slight advancement, is better fitted to serve as our intermediary, for the transmission of our thought to other spirits in flesh, than a disincarnate spirit of the same degree of

advancement could be; for the incarnate spirit lends us a fleshly body as an instrument, which cannot be done by a disincarnate spirit.

“But, when we find a medium with a brain well-furnished with knowledge acquired in his present life, and a spirit rich in latent acquisitions, derived from his anterior existences, and of a nature to facilitate our communication, we naturally prefer to make use of such a one; because, with such a medium, we communicate much more easily than with a medium of narrow intelligence, and whose stock of anterior knowledge is small.

“We will try to illustrate our meaning by a few concise explanations.

“Through a medium whose intelligence has been sufficiently developed by the experiences of present and past lives, we are able to flash our thoughts instantaneously, from our soul to his, by a gift inherent in the very nature of the soul. We are able to do this, in such a case, because we then find, in the medium’s brain, the elements fitted to give to our thought its appropriate clothing of words, whether the medium be intuitive, semi-mechanical, or purely mechanical. Thus, whatever may be the diversity of the spirits who communicate through a given medium, the communications obtained by him, though proceeding from various spirits, usually present a characteristic peculiarity of form and color due to his own personal individuality. Although the thought transmitted may be entirely foreign to him, although the subject treated of may be beyond his usual range of ideas, although what he says may not have proceeded in any way from his own mind, the *form* of our communication will, nevertheless, be modified by the influence of the qualities and properties which constitute his own personal individuality. It is precisely as when you look at landscapes or other objects through colored spectacles, whether green, white, blue, or red; though the landscapes or other objects thus seen are altogether different from one another, they all assume, nevertheless, a uniform tint imparted to them by the color of the glasses through which you see them. *We* are the light, lighting up those landscapes or other objects, moral or philosophical, through glasses of various colors; so that our luminous rays (forced, as they are, to pass through media more or less colorless and translucent, that is to say through mediums more or less intelligent and manageable) cannot reach the object we desire to light up, without borrowing the tint, that is to say, the peculiar personal form, of the medium. Let me illustrate my meaning by yet another comparison: We, spirits, are like musicians who wish to play an air of our composing, and who may have, at hand, either a piano a harp, a violin, a bassoon, or a flute. It is evident that we might execute our air on either of these instruments, and that it would be understood by our auditors, no matter on which instrument we played it although the various instruments differ greatly in the quality of the sound they emit, our composition, on whichever instrument we played it, would be identically the same, except in the special quality of the tone derived from the nature of the instrument employed. But if we had at our disposal only a

penny whistle, we should find it very much more difficult to execute our air so that our audience could comprehend it.

"In the same way, when we are obliged to make use of undeveloped mediums, our work is much more complicated, difficult, and tedious, because, in such a case, we are forced to employ inadequate means; and because we are then compelled, so to say, to *set up our thoughts*, as though putting them into type, communicating them, not only word by word, but letter by letter, which is tiresome and fatiguing for us, and constitutes a restraint on the rapidity and completeness of our manifestations.

"We therefore rejoice when we find mediums who are already prepared, well furnished with the requisite tools, and provided with materials ready for use; in a word, *good instruments*, for then our perispirit, acting instantaneously on the perispirit of him whom we *medianimize*, has only to give an impulsion to the hand which serves us for holding the pen or the pencil; while with inferior mediums, we are obliged to perform a task similar to that which we perform when we communicate by raps, that is to say, by pointing out, letter by letter, each word of the sentences which constitute the translation, into human language, of the thought we desire to impress upon you.

"This is why we have preferred to address ourselves, for the promulgation of spiritism and the development of mediumship, mainly to the educated classes, although it is in those classes that we find the greatest number of the incredulous, the recalcitrant, the immoral. But, just as we leave the production of tangible manifestations, rapping, carryings, etc., to backward and juggling spirits, so the less serious among you prefer those phenomena which strike the eyes or the ears, to communications which are purely intellectual and spiritual.

"When we desire to dictate a spontaneous communication, we act upon the brain of the medium, upon the materials that we find therein; and we blend our own materials with the fluidic elements which we thus procure from him: and we do this without his knowing anything about it. It is as though we took from his purse the money it contains, and arranged the different pieces in the order that suits ourselves.

"But when a medium wishes to consult us on any particular subject, he should reflect on that subject beforehand, in order to be able to question us methodically; thus facilitating for us the work of answering his questions. For, as you have already been told, your brain is often in inextricable disorder; and it is then both troublesome and difficult for us to move in the maze of your thoughts. When questions are to be asked by a third party, they should be communicated beforehand to the medium, so that he may identify himself with the spirit of the person who is to evoke us, thus *impregnating himself*, so to say, with his thought; and we are then enabled to reply with much greater ease, because, through the affinity existing between our perispirit and that of the medium, we are thus brought into a nearer relation with the party by whom we are to be questioned.

“It is true that we are sometimes able to treat, say, of mathematics, or some other subject, through a medium who *appears* to be ignorant of it but, in such cases, the knowledge required is often possessed by the medium’s spirit, *in* a *latent state*, that is to say, stored up in the personality of his fluidic being, although it is not included in the consciousness of his human personality, for the reason that his present human body is an instrument ill-adapted, or even antagonistic, to that particular branch of knowledge. It is the same with our communications in regard to astronomy, poetry, medicine, your various languages, and all the other branches of knowledge in your world. But when we have to employ mediums who are *really* ignorant of the subject to be treated of; we are obliged to resort to the troublesome method alluded to just now, *viz.*, that of putting together the letters of each word, as is done by the typesetter.

“As I have already said, spirits, among themselves, have no need to clothe their thoughts in words; thought is *perceived* and *communicated* by spirits, simply because thought exists, *in them*, as an attribute of their spiritual being.

Corporeal beings, on the contrary, can only perceive a thought when it is clothed upon with words, or some other forms of expression. While *you* need letters and words, the substantive, the verb, the sentence, in order that a thought may thus be conveyed to your understanding, no visible or tangible sign is needed by us.

Remark – This analysis of the part performed by mediums, and of the processes by the aid of which spirits communicate, is as clear as it is logical. It shows us that spirits derive, *not their ideas*, but *the material necessary for expressing their ideas*, from the medium’s brain; and that, consequently, the richer this brain is in materials, the easier is it for them to communicate through its possessor. When a spirit expresses himself in the language familiar to the medium, he finds, already formed, in the medium’s brain, the words with which to clothe his ideas; if he would express himself in a language which the medium does not understand, he does not find the needed *words*, but simply *letters*, and he is therefore obliged to dictate his message, letter by letter, exactly as we should have to do, if we tried to make a man, who does not know a word of German, write in that language. If the medium can neither write nor read, he does not possess even the letters required for the formation of words; and the communicating spirits are then obliged to guide his hand, as we do with a child who is learning to write. In such cases, there is evidently a greater amount of physical difficulty, and difficulty of another order, to be overcome. Phenomena of the kind we are considering, are possible, and, as we know, often occur; but such a mode of procedure is ill adapted for the giving of lengthened communications, and spirits naturally prefer instruments more manageable, or to employ their own expression, mediums “provided with good tools and materials” for their special purposes. If those who ask for such phenomena, as proofs of spirit-action, had studied the subject theoretically beforehand,

they would understand the exceptional character of the conditions required for obtaining them.

CHAPTER 20

Mental and Moral Influence of the Medium

Questions – Dissertation of a spirit on the mental and moral influence of Mediums on Spirit-manifestation.

226. (1) Does the development of mediumship depend on the moral development of the medium?

“No; strictly speaking, psychic ability depends on the organism, and is independent of the moral nature. This, however, is not the case as regards the use made of mediumship, which may be good or bad, according to the moral qualities of the medium.”

(2) It has always been asserted that psychic ability is a gift of God, a grace, a favor; why, then, is it not the exclusive privilege of the good, and why is it bestowed on people who are unworthy of it, and misuse it?

“All abilities are favors for which you should be grateful; but you might just as well ask why God grants good eyesight to malefactors, sharp wits to sharpers, eloquence to men who use it for evil purposes. It is the same in regard to mediumship; unworthy people are often endowed with it, because they need it more than others, and in order that it may aid their improvement. Do you suppose that God refuses the means of amendment to the wicked? On the contrary, He multiplies those means about them at every step; *He places them in their hands*; it is for those to whom they have been given to profit by them. Was not Judas endowed, as an apostle, with apostolic gifts?

God permitted him to be thus endowed, that he might afterwards see more clearly the odiousness of his treason”.

How much more consistent with the justice and goodness of God is the explanation we are now charged to give you of the treason of Judas, as having been, on the one hand, the result of the pride and presumption of a spirit still too backward for the trial he had persisted in attempting, and, on the other hand, of a permission which had only been granted him in order that, through a failure which was foreseen to be inevitable, he might be cured of those imperfections, once and for ever, by the misery he would thus have brought upon himself!”

“(The hand of the medium, having written the preceding statement, was suddenly controlled by a new influence, under which it again wrote, as follows:) “How great is that Being Who makes the very crime of the wrongdoer to become the starting point of his regenerative career of repentance and purification?

“How good is that Being Who is always ready to forgive the sincerely repentant, Whose beneficence sustains him under the sufferings he has brought upon himself by his wrongdoing, and Who leads him on to deliverance through the reformatory influences of expiation and effort! Glory to Thee in the Highest, O my God!

"The hand of the medium, after writing this message, was again controlled by another influence, and continued thus:

"The love of God is extended to *all* His creatures. Let all those who have gone astray return with confidence into the path which leads to Him. They will all be welcomed; those who have wandered most widely, even more warmly than the rest: for it is not the innocent who need forgiveness, it is not the strong who need help and support. Let all who regret their wrongdoing commence at once the work of self-amendment and pursue that end unwaveringly, as we have done; they will be aided and sustained, as we have been. For, like all of you, we have been guilty; but we have repented of our wrongdoing and have expiated, through painful and repeated efforts, the crimes we had committed. In the long series of human existences which have prepared and accomplished our purification, we have cured ourselves of the defects to which we had succumbed.

"Our Judge is just; but His justice is paternal, and His judgments are always proportioned to our powers of endurance. He makes us pay, to the uttermost farthing, all that we owe Him; but He is a patient and merciful creditor, and gives us all the time and all the help that we need for paying our debt.

"Judas has achieved his regeneration through the purifying action of repentance, remorse, expiation, reincarnation, and progress; and he is now one of the humble, active, devoted auxiliaries of Christ.

His rehabilitation should show you that you must never shut out anyone of your brethren from your help and kindness, nor regard him as being excluded from the ultimate attainment of the purity and happiness for which you are all being educated, by Providence, through the trials and discipline of human life."

MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, JOHN, ASSISTED BY THE APOSTLES; JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA, SIMON OF CYRENE

(3) Will mediums that misuse their abilities suffer in consequence?

"They will be punished doubly, because they possess, beyond others, the means of enlightenment. He who, having the use of his eyes, fails to follow the right road is judged otherwise than the blind man who falls into a ditch."

(4) Some mediums receive communications spontaneously, and almost constantly, on the same subject, on moral questions, for example, or certain faults. Is this allowed to occur for any special object?

"Yes; for their own enlightenment in regard to the subject so frequently treated of; and to cure them of the faults thus pointed out. It is to this end that spirits constantly speak, to one, of pride, to another, of charity, for there are natures that need this incessant repetition of warning and advice to open their eyes to a perception of their own defects. The medium who misuses his gift through ambition or selfishness, or who disgraces it by some glaring fault, such as vanity, egotism, levity, etc., is sure to receive,

from time to time, warnings from the spirits about him; but unfortunately, he often fails to take such warnings to himself."

Remark – Spirits are often extremely cautious in their remonstrations, and make them indirectly, in order to leave the greater merit to him who profits by their homilies.

But there are people so blinded by pride and self-conceit as not to recognize their own portrait, even when placed before their very eyes; nay, more, if a spirit gives them to understand that the picture is meant for *them*, they get angry, which shows that spirits are right to act with caution in their endeavors to moralize those to whom they address themselves.

(5) But are there not cases in which a homily is thus dictated to a medium in a general way, without its being intended for him and in which he merely serves as an instrument for the instruction of others? "Undoubtedly; the advice we give is often intended for others, whom we can only address through the intermediary of the medium, but he, too, might sometimes reap benefit from the lesson, if he were willing to do so, although you are right in assuming that psychic ability is intended, not merely for the moral improvement of the medium himself, but for that of all mankind. We regard a medium as *an instrument*, and we prize him as such, but without regarding him as being individually of any more importance than other people; and accordingly, as we give our teachings for the general good, we make use, indifferently, of any medium who offers us the requisite organic conditions.

But you may be very sure that the time will come when good mediums will be so common, that superior spirits will be able to choose their instruments, and will no longer make use of mediums of inferior mental and moral advancement, merely because of their psychic organism."

(6) Since the moral goodness of a medium keeps away imperfect spirits, how is it that false or unseemly statements are sometimes transmitted through a medium who is morally good?

"Can you look into all the recesses of a medium's soul? Though not vicious, he may still be frivolous, or may be but imperfectly cured of some defect; and he may need an occasional lesson to keep him on his guard."

(7) How is it that superior spirits permit people endowed with great psychic power, and who might therefore do much good, to be the instruments of error?

"Spirits try to influence all mediums for good; but when mediums persist in following a wrong road, we leave them to themselves. We use mediums of slight moral advancement, but reluctantly, and from lack of better ones; for we know that truth cannot be duly transmitted by a liar."

(8) Is it absolutely impossible to obtain good communications through a medium but little advanced in point of morality?

"Such a medium may sometimes obtain good communications, because, if possessed of good psychic abilities, the higher spirits may use him, as we have just said, under particular circumstances, or for want of a better; but

they will only make a momentary use of him, and will give him up as soon as they find another whose moral qualities suit them better."

Remark – It is to be observed, that, when superior sprits see a medium becoming, through his moral delinquencies, the prey of deceitful spirits, they almost always bring about incidents which show up his faultiness, and thus prevent serious and well-intentioned inquirers from being taken in by him. In such a case, however great may be the ability of the medium, his exposure is not to be regretted.

(9) What are the qualities that would constitute a perfect medium?

"Perfect? Alas! You well know that perfection is not to be found upon the earth; and that, moreover, if it were, you would not be in it! Say, rather, a *good* medium, and that is saying a good deal, for 'good mediums' are rare. The 'perfect' medium would be one whom evil spirits would not even dare to *attempt* to deceive; the *best* your earth can furnish at present is he, who, sympathizing only with good spirits, is least often deceived."

(10) If a medium sympathizes only with good spirits, why do they allow him to be deceived?

"Good spirits sometimes permit deception to be practiced even on the best mediums, in order to exercise their judgment, and to teach them to discern the true from the false and besides, however good a medium may be, he is never so perfect that he has not some weak point which lays him open to attack; and so he now and then gets a lesson. The false communications which he receives from time to time are warnings not to think himself infallible, and not to give way to pride; for the medium who obtains the most admirable communications has no more reason to be proud of them than an organ-grinder who should grind out the most splendid music by merely turning the handle of some unusually well-constructed barrel organ."

(11) What are the best conditions for ensuring the correct transmission of the communications of superior spirits?

"Good intentions, and the renunciation of *selfishness* and *pride*; both these conditions are essential."

(12) If the communications of superior spirits can only be correctly transmitted to us under conditions so difficult to secure, does not this difficulty constitute an obstacle to the propagation of truth?

"No; for light always comes to those who are willing to receive it. The darkness you have to dissipate results from impurity of heart. Get rid of pride, cupidity, selfishness, and good spirits will help you to light, even without the aid of ostensible mediumship.

"Let all who, not having a medium at hand, are desirous to obtain enlightenment, use their own reason in learning more and more of the infinite power and wisdom of the Creator; they will thus give the best evidence of their sincerity, and that sincerity will ensure to them the occult assistance of spirits of high degree."

227. Although a medium, as such, is only an instrument, he nevertheless exercises a very considerable influence on the communications from the spirit-world.

The communicating spirit is obliged, in order to communicate, to identify himself with the spirit of the medium; and as this identification can only take place in proportion to the sympathy, the "affinity," to borrow the expression of Erastes, existing between them, it follows that the soul of the medium attracts or repels disincarnate spirits, according to the degree of their similitude or dissimilitude. Thus good mediums attract good spirits, and bad mediums attract evil spirits; because the moral qualities of the medium necessarily determine the *kind* of spirits who communicate through his mediumship. If a medium is vicious, inferior spirits come around him in crowds, taking the place of the good spirits who may have been evoked. The qualities that attract good spirits are kindness, goodwill, single-mindedness, love of the neighbor, and detachment from earthly things; the defects that repel them are pride, vanity, selfishness, envy, jealousy, hatred, greed, sensuality, and all the passions by which man attaches himself to matter.

228. All moral imperfections are so many open doors, giving access to evil spirits; but what brings us most often under their influence is pride, because it is the defect which of all others we are least apt to recognize in ourselves. Pride has been the ruin of numbers of mediums endowed with the highest abilities, and who, but for that defect, might have become equally remarkable and useful; instead of which, their pride having subjected them to the domination of deceptive spirits, their psychic abilities have been first perverted, then annihilated, and, in more than one instance, such mediums have brought upon themselves the most humiliating retribution.

Pride shows itself in mediums by unequivocal signs, to which it is all the more necessary to draw attention, because it is the defect which, more than any other, is fatal to the veracity of their communications. Pride puffs them up with a blind confidence in the superiority of the communications obtained by them and in the infallibility of the spirit from whom they emanate; and leads them to disdain whatever does not come through their own mediumship, and to look upon themselves as having a monopoly of truth. Dazzled by the great names unscrupulously assumed by the spirits who communicate through them, their self-love prevents them from seeing that they are deceived, and causes them to repel all advice, and to keep away from everyone who might open their eyes to the reality of their position. Even should they condescend to listen to advice, they pay no attention to it, and resent as a profanation the suggestion of a doubt as to the excellence of their familiar spirit. They are offended by contradiction or criticism, detest those who warn them of their delusion, and gradually withdraw into an isolation in which they become the sport of obsessing spirits, who make them accept the most glaring absurdities as something sublime. Thus – a blind confidence in the communications made through

their agency, contempt for those that are made through other mediums, an overweening confidence in great names, repudiation of advice, angry rejection of all criticism, estrangement from those who would give them disinterested counsel, belief in their own infallibility – such are the distinguishing signs of pride in mediums.

It must be admitted, however, that pride is often excited in a medium by the injudicious flattery of the people about him. If possessed of abilities at all remarkable, he is sought out, cried up, and courted, until he comes to look upon himself as indispensable, and affects an air of self-sufficiency and superciliousness when condescending to lend himself to his work. We have more than once had cause to regret the praise we had given to certain mediums, for the purpose of encouraging them.

229. In contrast to the class of mediums just referred to, let us turn to the picture of the *really good medium*, one in whom we may safely confide. We will suppose him, in the first place, to be endowed with an ability sufficiently developed to admit of the free communication of spirits, unimpeded by physical difficulties. This being premised, the next thing to be considered is the nature of the spirits with whom he is habitually in communication; and for the ascertainment of this point we must rely, not on the names they give themselves, but on the tenor of their communications. We must never forget that the sympathies which a medium conciliates among spirits *are in direct proportion to what he does to attract the good ones and to keep off the evil ones*.

Believing that his ability is a gift bestowed on him for good, the true medium neither prides himself upon it, nor makes any merit of it. He accepts the manifestations made through him as a blessing of which he should strive to render himself worthy by modesty, kindness, and goodwill. The *proud medium* takes credit to himself for his mediumship the *good medium* is rendered more humble by his intercourse with superior spirits, because regarding himself as unworthy of such a favor.

230. The following remarks on this subject were made to us by a spirit whose communications we have already quoted several times in the present work:

“As we have told you, mediums, as such, play but a secondary part in the work of spirit-communication; their action is that of the electric machine which transmits telegraphic dispatches from one point of the earth’s surface to another point. Thus, when we wish to dictate a communication, we act on the medium, as the telegraph clerk acts on his machinery; that is to say, just as the action of the telegraphic needle impresses on a band of paper, thousands of leagues away, the signs which reproduce the dispatch, so, by means of psychic apparatus, we transmit, athwart the immeasurable distances which separate the visible material world from the invisible immaterial world, the communications we are permitted to make to you. And just as atmospheric influences act upon, and sometimes disturb, the transmission of a telegraphic dispatch, so the moral influence of the

medium acts upon, and sometimes disturbs, the transmission of our dispatches from the world beyond the grave, when we are obliged to transmit those dispatches through a medium who is sympathetically or intellectually opposed to their tenor. This opposing influence is, however, often annulled by the energy of our will; so that messages of high philosophic import and elevated morality are sometimes conveyed through mediums but little fitted for their transmission; while, on the other hand, very unedifying communications are occasionally intruded through mediums who are grieved and ashamed to have been used for their transmission. But, notwithstanding these occasional exceptions, it may be affirmed, as a general proposition, that incarnate spirits attract disincarnate spirits of similar nature and advancement, and that spirits of high degree rarely communicate through mediums who are bad conductors, when they have at hand good psychic machinery, that is to say, good mediums.

“Mediums who do not understand the responsibility of their mission attract frivolous spirits, whose communications are commonplace, shallow, incoherent, and heterodox from the spiritist point of view. Mediums who are used as penholders or mouthpieces by pretentious, presumptuous, or deceptive spirits, sometimes say very good things but, for this very reason, spirit-messages must always be subjected to severe and scrupulous examination; for, in the midst of these good things, hypocritical and perfidious spirits often artfully introduce false statements, calculated to mislead their auditors. Every doubtful word and sentence must therefore be stricken out, and only what is in accordance with reason, or with the principles of spiritist doctrine already laid down and accepted, should be preserved.

Communications of the nature we are considering are only dangerous for isolated

spiritists, or for groups of spiritists who have but recently taken up the subject and are but little enlightened; for, in societies whose members are more experienced, the jay gains nothing by putting on peacock feathers, and is sure to find his borrowed plumage speedily stripped away.

“I do not speak of mediums who take pleasure in evil communications; let us leave them to the congenial society of cynical spirits. Fortunately, communications of this order are rarely made in serious circles, and, at all events, can excite only contempt and disgust among the members of serious and philosophic groups. But, where the influence of the medium is really of great importance, is in the involuntary substitution of his own ideas for those which the communicating spirits endeavor to suggest; and, still more so, in the building up of baseless and fantastic theories, in accordance with his own opinions or prejudices, whether as a product of his own mind, or derived from the suggestions of ignorant or mocking spirits.

“‘When in doubt, abstain,’ says one of your oldest and wisest proverbs; admit only what is supported by evidence. When any new idea is brought forward, however specious it may appear, subject it to the test of reason

and common sense, and reject, unhesitatingly, whatever is in opposition with them. Remember that it is better to repudiate a dozen truths than to admit a single error; for, upon that one error, you might build up a whole false theory, only to see it crumble away like a pillar of sand, at the first breath of truth; whereas, though you should reject a true idea when first presented, and because it does not seem to you to be sufficiently proved, some indisputable fact, or some irrefutable argument, will ere long afford you the necessary proof of its correctness.

“Meantime, O Spiritists! Remember that nothing is impossible with God and with good spirits, excepting the triumph of error and iniquity.

“Spiritism and its admirable doctrine are now so widely diffused that spirits of high degree are no longer compelled to employ mediums of defective moral quality; and therefore, if any medium gives just ground for suspicion, by unseemly conduct or manners, by pride or selfishness, repudiate alike both him and his mediumship, however powerful the latter may be, for, in all such cases, there is a snake beneath the flowers. And with this piece of advice, I conclude my dissertation on *the moral influence of mediums*.

ERASTES

---

* “The treason of Judas was not the result of a predestination, which would have been in contradiction with the justice and goodness of God. Judas was the reincarnation of a spirit who, though proud and presumptuous, was desirous to advance, and had demanded, in the state of erraticity, to be permitted to take part in the special work upon the earth for which its Protecting Christ was then preparing; a participation from which he hoped to reap a rich reward. In vain did his spirit-guides dissuade him from attempting a trial which they saw to be beyond his strength; in vain did they warn him that the influences of the fleshly life would obscure the remembrance of his aim and his good resolutions, and would, at the same time, rouse his instincts of envy and cupidity, and that he would thus be drawn into a failure all the more disastrous from the obstinacy to which it would due: he rejected their counsels, and persisted in his demand. Christ foresaw that the terrible experience which Judas was preparing for himself would complete his purification from the evil qualities which were keeping him back; and He therefore acceded to his request. The humble position of terrestrial life into which this proud, envious, and sensual spirit was born (as a condition of the trial he had so unwisely elected to undergo) weighed heavily upon him. Blinded as he was by the veil of materiality, he could not understand the respect and admiration with which the Celestial Envoy was regarded by all who approached Him, and his jealousy of the Master gradually assumed the form of hatred; tempted by his craving for luxury and sensual enjoyment, he robbed the common purse of which he was the custodian, and betrayed his Master for money. “The interpretation of the Gospels hitherto received has represented Judas as having been *predestined*, from his birth, to do these evil deeds, and as having been given over *beforehand* to the Devil; his soul, according to that interpretation, *had been created* vile, abject, envious, luxurious, ungrateful, sanguinary, for the express purpose of fulfilling certain prophecies of the Old Testament.

CHAPTER 21

Influence of Surroundings on Spirit-Manifestations

231.
(1) Is the action of mediumship affected by the quality of the spirits with whom a medium is habitually surrounded?
"All the spirits who surround a medium influence him for good or for evil."
(2) Cannot the higher spirits neutralize the evil tendency of the incarnate spirit who serves as their interpreter and of the inferior spirits by whom he is neutralized?
"Yes, when they consider it useful to do so. We have already said that spirits are sometimes enabled, by a special favor, to transmit a communication correctly, despite the imperfection of the medium and his surroundings; but, in such cases, the influence of the latter is nullified by their action."
(3) When people seek to obtain manifestations merely as an amusement, do higher spirits sometimes respond to their evocation, in order to lead them on, if possible, to more serious thoughts?
"Superior spirits do not go to circles where they know that their presence would be thrown away. We willingly go to circles of which the members are but little enlightened, provided we see them to be animated by a sincere desire for light, even though we know that we shall find only inferior instruments among them; while we do not go to meetings of more educated people, if we see that they have been brought together by a sentiment of hostility or of scorn. Such people must be convinced through the eyes and the ears; and *that* is a work which must be performed by the rappers and the mountebanks of the spirit-world.
It is fitting that those who are puffed up by what they call their 'science,' should be puzzled and baffled by the least scientific and the least advanced of the people of the world so contemptuously ignored by their 'science.' "
(4) Is access to serious meetings forbidden to inferior spirits?
"No; they sometimes attend them in order to profit by the instructive communications received in them; but they are obliged to remain silent, *like ignorant listeners in the assemblies of the wise*."
232. It is a mistake to suppose that a man must be a medium in order to attract to himself the beings of the invisible world. Space is peopled with spirits; they are always around us, always beside us; they see us and watch us; they mingle in our meetings, and follow or avoid us, according as we attract or repel them. Psychic ability has no influence in this respect; for that ability is only a *means of communication*. After what we have said respecting the causes of sympathy and antipathy in spirits, it will be easily understood that we are surrounded by those who are in affinity with us, whether our state be one of elevation or of degradation. If we consider the

moral condition of our globe, we see what must be the character of the vast majority of the wandering spirits about us; and if we take each country separately, we may judge, by the ruling characteristics of its inhabitants, by their occupations, and by their moral and human sentiments, what sort of spirits are most intimately connected with it.

Keeping this indication in view, let us imagine a party of gay, frivolous, unreasoning people, busy only with what they call “pleasure;” what kind of spirits would be most apt to keep them company? Certainly not spirits of a high order, who would be as little attracted to them as would be philosophers and men of science among ourselves. Thus, whenever men assemble together, they have around the man invisible assembly, sympathizing with their good or bad qualities, and this, *as a matter of course*, and without any evocation having been made or even thought of. Let us suppose, still farther, that the human beings thus assembled possess the means of conversing with the invisible beings about them through an interpreter – that is to say, through a medium – and that they make an evocation; what spirits would be most likely to answer to their call? Evidently those who are already present; ready, and waiting, and only too glad of an opportunity to talk with them. If, in an assembly of such a character, a superior spirit should be evoked, it is possible that he may come, and may even give a communication, in the shape of good advice; but as soon as he finds that he is not attended to, he retires, as all sensible people would do in his place, and leaves them to give free reign to their folly.

233. But it is not always enough for a meeting to be seriously inclined, in order to obtain high-toned communications. There are men who never smile, but whose hearts are none the purer for this eternal gravity; and it is by *purity of heart*, more than by anything else, that elevated spirits are attracted. No moral condition excludes spirit-communications; but if our moral conditions are bad, we enter into conversation with spirits of a similar badness, who do not scruple to deceive us by flattering our weakness or our prejudices, in order to lead us astray.

From the preceding considerations we perceive how enormous is the influence exercised by our surroundings on the nature of the intelligent communications we receive; but this influence is not exercised as was formerly supposed, when the world of spirits was Comparatively unknown to us. When the communications received by an assembly are in accordance with the opinion of its members, it is not because that opinion is reflected in the medium’s mind as in a mirror, but because we all have with us spirits who think as we do, and who sympathize with us for good or for evil, as is proved by the fact, that, if the people who form a circle have the moral force to attract other spirits than those who habitually surround him, *the same medium* will hold a language altogether different from that which he had previously held, and may even make statements at variance with his usual thoughts and convictions.

To sum up, the influence of conditions and surroundings will be favorable in proportion to the similarity of thought and feeling between the members of a circle and the spirits about them, in the love of truth, the purity and elevation of their aspirations, and the sincerity of their desire for enlightenment.

CHAPTER 22

Mediumship of Animals

234. Can animals be used as mediums?

This question has been often asked, and the observation of certain facts appeared to suggest the possibility of an affirmative answer; this opinion being mainly accredited by the remarkable intelligence of some of the creatures of the lower reigns, when trained to perform feats which seem to imply a reasoning cooperation, if not a sort of second-sight, on their part. We have studied the exhibitions referred to with the greatest care; but, although we cannot refuse to admit the possession of a relative intelligence by animals, what we found to be most conclusively proved by their seeming lucidity is the skill and perseverance that must have been bestowed on their training. We have also witnessed feats of conjuring that imitated the facts of somnambulism and second-sight so ingeniously as to astonish the uninitiated, but which, nevertheless, to the eyes of those who are practically acquainted with somnambulism, showed an egregious ignorance, on the part of the conjurors, of its most elementary conditions.

235. The evidences of artifice afforded by the exhibitions of trained animals, birds, and even insects, do not, however, dispose of the question we are considering; for, just as the tricks of sham somnambulism prove nothing against the existence of the somnambulic state, so the fact that the feats just referred to are merely mechanical, and are not the result of the gift of second-sight or of reason, proves nothing against the possibility of the existence of those abilities in animals. What we have to ascertain is, therefore, *whether animals are capable, like men, of serving as intermediaries to spirits for the transmission of intelligent communications*.

It might seem, at first sight, only reasonable to suppose that a living being, endowed with a certain portion of intelligence, would be better adapted for this purpose than an inert body without vitality of its own, such as a table, for example; but this is not the case.

236. The question of the mediumship of animals is completely settled in the following dissertation by a spirit whose profundity and sagacity our readers have already been enabled to appreciate by preceding quotations. In order to perceive the full force of his reasoning, we must bear in mind the explanation given by him of the part performed by the medium in the transmission of communications (225).

Dissertation on the question of the mediumship of animals, dictated spontaneously after a discussion of the subject at a meeting of the Parisian Society of Psychologic Studies.

“I am about to address you on the question of the mediumship of animals, brought up, and affirmatively argued, by one of your most fervent members, who asserts, in virtue of the axiom, ‘*He who can do the greater can do the*

lesser' – that it is possible for us to medianimize birds and other creatures of the animal reign, and to use them as our instruments in communicating with the human race. The argument brought forward by him is, however, purely and simply what your logicians call *a sophism*. He argues, that, as we can vitalize inert matter – a table, a chair, a piano, etc., we ought, *a fortiori*, to be able to medianimize matter already living. This, however, is not, and cannot be done.

"But, first of all, let us be agreed as to our facts. *What is a medium*? – The being, the individual, who serves as the connecting link which enables disincarnate spirits to communicate with incarnate spirits, that is to say, with men. Consequently, without a medium, you can have no ostensible communication with spirits, whether tangible, mental, scriptive, physical, or of any other kind.

"There is one principle which, I am sure, is admitted by all spiritists, *viz.*, that like attracts like. But what are the similar spirits, if not *spirits*, whether incarnate or disincarnate? Your perispirit and ours are derived from the same source, are identical in nature, are, in a word, *similar spirits* possess the properties of assimilation, more or less developed, and of magnetization, more or less vigorous, which enable us, spirits and men, to enter quickly and easily into relation with each other. In fine, what appertains specially to mediums, what constitutes the very essence of mediumship, is a special affinity, and, at the same time, a force of expansion peculiar to them, which nullifies in them all refrangibility, and establishes between us and them a sort of current, a kind of fusion, which facilitates our communications. It is this absence of refrangibility that constitutes a *medium*, just as it is the refrangibility of their material envelope which prevents the development of mediumship in those who are not mediums.

"Men are prone to exaggeration in everything; some (and I am not now alluding to professed materialists) deny that animals have a soul, while others insist upon it that they have a soul like ours. Why will they confound what is perfectible with what is not? Be quite sure of this, *viz.*, that the fire which animates the beasts, the breath which makes them act, move, and speak in their special language, has not, *in their present phase of development*, any aptitude for mingling, uniting, blending, with the divine breath, the ethereal soul, in a word, *the spirit* which animates the essentially perfectible being, *man*, the king of terrestrial creatures. Is it not this very quality of perfectibility that constitutes the superiority of the human race over the other terrestrial species? Let it, then, be distinctly understood that you cannot assimilate to man, who alone is perfectible in himself and in his works, any individual of the other races living upon the earth.

"Is the dog, whose superior intelligence among animals has rendered him the friend and messmate of man, capable of attaining to perfection, in himself, and of his own personal initiative? No one would dream of making such an assertion, for the dog neither progresses nor makes his fellow dog

progress; the best-taught dog has always been trained by his master. Ever since the world was made, the beaver has built his hut over the stream, according to the same proportions, and by the same invariable rule; the nightingales and the swallows have never made their nests otherwise than did their parents before them. A nest of sparrows, before the deluge and at the present day, is always the same nest, built under the same conditions, with the same interweaving of the same materials, gathered in the Spring, at the season of love. The bees and the ants, in their little household-republics, have never varied in their provident habits, propensities, ways, or productions. The spider still weaves his web just as he always wove it, at every period of the earth's development.

"On the other hand, if you look for the leafy huts, and rude tents, of the early ages of the human race, you will find, in their place, the palaces and habitations of modern civilization; tissues of silk, and ornaments of gold, have taken the place of man's primitive clothing of undressed skins; and evidences of the incessant advance of humanity in every department of progress meet you at every step.

"From the onward movement of the human race – constant, invincible, undeniable – and from the persistently stationary position of the other species of animated beings, you should conclude, with me, that, while certain principles, *viz.*, breath and matter, are common to all that live and move upon the earth, it is none the less true that you alone, you, spirits incarnated in earthly bodies, are placed under the action of the inevitable law of progress which urges you, necessarily, and for ever, *onward*. God hat placed the animals by your side as auxiliaries, to feed you, to clothe you, to second you, and has given them a certain portion of intelligence, because, in order to aid you, they must, to a certain extent, comprehend you, and their intelligence has therefore been proportioned to the services which they are called upon to render; but, in His wisdom,

He has not placed them under *the same* law of progress as you; such as they were created, such they have remained, and such they will remain until the extinction of their races.

"It has been said; 'Spirits medianimize inert matter, such as chairs, tables, pianos, etc, and make them move. Yes, we make them *move*; but, as to *medianimizing* them, no! For, I repeat, no spirit phenomenon can be produced without a medium.

What is there wonderful in the fact that we should, with the aid of one or more mediums, make matter move, seeing that it is inert and passive, and is therefore fitted, *just because it is inert and passive*, to obey the movements and impulsions with which we impress it? In order thus to impress it, we require a medium; but it is not necessary that the medium should be present, or *conscious* of our action; for we are able to act with the elements furnished by him, without his knowledge, and away from his presence, especially in cases of tangibility and carryings. Through the uniting, blending, combining of our fluidic envelope – more imponderable and subtle

than the most imponderable and subtle of your gases – with the fluidic but *animalized* envelope of the medium, which possesses an expansibility and penetrability unimaginable by your gross senses and inexplicable for you, we are enabled to move objects, and to break them to pieces, even in uninhabited rooms.

"Spirits can render themselves visible and tangible to animals and the sudden terror with which the latter are sometimes seized, and for which you can perceive no reason, is caused by their seeing one or several spirits bearing ill-will towards their owners, or towards some of the people present. You frequently see horses that will neither go forwards nor backwards, or that rear or shy at some obstacle unseen by you, and which is often a spirit, or a group of spirits, terrifying the animal, out of malice, or by way of a joke. Remember how Balaam's ass, seeing an angel before her, and frightened at his flaming sword, stood obstinately still; the angel, before making himself visible to Balaam, having appeared first to the animal only. But, though we can render ourselves visible to animals, we cannot medianimize them any more than we can medianimize inert matter; the *conscious* or *unconscious* cooperation of a human medium is *always* a necessary condition of our intercommunication with men, because, for this, we require the union of similar fluids, which do not exist either in the animals or in inert matter.

"The advocate of the idea I am combating says that he magnetized his dog; but what was the result of that magnetization? *The death of the dog*; for the unfortunate animal died, after having fallen into a state of agony and languor, the consequence of his magnetization. By inundating the dog with a fluid of an essence superior to the essence proper to its nature, he killed it; for he acted upon it just as lightning would have done, only more slowly. Therefore, as no assimilation is possible between our perispirit and the fluidic envelope of animals, properly so-called, we should kill them instantly if we attempted to medianimize them.

This point being clearly established, I fully admit that there exist in animals various aptitudes; that certain sentiments, certain passions, identical with human passions and sentiments, are developed in them; that they possess consciousness, and are affectionate and grateful, or vindictive and full of hatred, according to the way in which they are treated by you; and that those, especially, that are intended to be the companions or the servants of man, have been endowed, by God, with a capacity, for entering into sociable relations with him, of which the wild beasts of the desert are almost entirely destitute. But, between this, and the power of serving as intermediaries for the transmission of a spirit's thought, there is a great gulf, *viz.*, the difference of natures.

"You know that we draw, from the brain of the medium, the necessary elements for giving to our thought *a form* that may be visible and tangible for you. It is with the aid of the materials possessed by him that the medium is able thus to translate our thought into human words; but what elements

for such translation could we find in the brain of an animal? What animal's brain could furnish us with words, letters, numerals, or signs of any kind, similar to those which are in use among even the most backward of mankind?

"Still,' you may say, 'animals comprehend men's thoughts; they even divine them.' True, trained animals do understand certain thoughts of the people about them; but did you ever know them to reproduce or transmit those thoughts? No; then you must admit that animals cannot serve as interpreters of the thoughts of spirits.

"To sum up: ostensible Spirit-action upon men cannot take place without the conscious or unconscious cooperation of a medium; and it is only human beings, *who are spirits like ourselves*, that can be used as such by us. The training of (dogs, birds, or other animals, to perform certain feats, is a matter of merely human ingenuity, with which we have nothing to do.

ERASTES

CHAPTER 23

Obsession

Simple obsession – Fascination – Subjugation – Causes of obsession – Means of combating obsession.

237. Among the difficulties incident to practical spiritism, we must place in the first rank, *obsession*, that is to say, the empire exercised by certain spirits over certain men. Obsession is always the work of inferior spirits, ambitious of keeping human beings under their power superior spirits desire no such tyrannical influence, but content themselves with giving good advice and combating the evil influence of lower spirits; if we fail to give heed to them, they retire. Bad spirits, on the contrary, attach themselves obstinately to the human being over whom they obtain a hold, identifying themselves with his spirit, and leading him as you lead a child.

Obsession presents various characters which it is very important to distinguish, as they result both from the degree of restraint exercised by the obsessor, and from the nature of the effects produced by his action.

The word *obsession* is a generic term, designating a phenomenon, of which the principal varieties are: *Simple Obsession*, *Fascination*, *and Subjugation*.

238. Simple obsession exists when a maleficent spirit imposes himself on a medium, mixing himself up, against the medium's will, with all the communications received by the latter, or preventing him from communicating with other spirits, by substituting himself for those who are evoked.

A medium is not necessarily obsessed because deceived by a lying spirit; the best medium is exposed to such deception, especially in the beginning of his development, while still deficient in experience; just as, among ourselves, the most honest men, and especially when they first enter into business, are liable to be taken in by a rogue. A medium may be deceived without being obsessed; obsession consists in the tenacity of the hold that has been taken by the spirit, rendering it difficult or impossible to get rid of him.

In simple obsession, the medium is aware that he has to do with a deceptive spirit, a fact that the obsessor rarely tries to conceal, for he usually does not attempt to hide either his evil intentions, or his determination to be troublesome. The medium, in such a case, easily recognizes the deceit, keeps on his guard, and is rarely taken in.

This sort of obsession is merely disagreeable, and has no other inconvenience than that of placing an obstacle in the way of the communication which it is wished to maintain with spirits of higher degree, or with those who are united to us by affection. In this category may be placed all cases of *physical obsession*, such as the obtrusive and obstinate manifestations of spirits who spontaneously annoy people with the sound of blows and other noises phenomena of which we have already treated in our chapter on *Spontaneous Physical Manifestations* (82).

239. Fascination is a much more serious evil. It is an illusion that is produced by the direct action of a spirit on the mediums thought, and which paralyses his judgment with regard to the communication he receives. The fascinated medium cannot believe himself capable of being deceived. The obsessing spirit artfully inspires him with a blind confidence, which prevents him from seeing the absurdity of what he writes, even when this is clear to everyone else; a delusion which may go so far as to make him regard with admiration the most ridiculous nonsense. It would be a serious error to suppose that this species of obsession is confined to mediums who are merely ignorant and wanting in judgment; intellectual and learned men, who are highly intelligent in other respects, are not exempt from it, which proves that this aberration is the effect of some exterior action to which they are exposed.

We have said that fascination is much more serious than simple obsession, because, through the illusion caused by it, the obsessing spirit leads his victim as though he were blind, making him accept the most ridiculous statements and theories as truth, and, in some cases, exciting him to actions of the most insensate, compromising, and even dangerous character.

The difference between simple obsession and fascination is easily understood, as is also the different quality of the spirits by whom they are produced. In obsession, the spirit who attaches himself to us is only importunate and annoying from his tenacity; he is a being we are impatient to be rid of. In fascination, it is quite otherwise, for, in order to compass his ends, the evil spirit must be adroit, cunning, and hypocritical, imposing upon his victim, and getting himself accepted, with the aid of a false semblance of virtue, and a lavish employment of words and phrases, such as “charity,” “humility,” “the love of God,” etc., which men are apt to regard as credentials, though the tenor of his communications show a degree of inferiority which only the fascination he exercises over his medium can prevent the latter from perceiving. A spirit of this class, therefore, dreads the presence of clear-sighted judges who would see through his deceptions, and directs his efforts especially to inspiring his victim with the determination to avoid everyone who could undeceive him. By so doing, he avoids contradiction, and is always able to prove himself, in the eyes of his unfortunate medium, to be in the right.

240. The third degree of obsession, *viz.*, *subjugation*, is a constraint which paralyses the will of its victim, and makes him act in spite of himself, reducing him to a state of absolute *bondage*.

Subjugation may be *moral* or *corporeal*. In the first case, the subjugated medium is often drawn on to do things which are foolish or reprehensible, but which he is deluded into regarding as wise and proper; it is a species of fascination, but one which is exercised on the *will* as well as on the *mind*. In the second case, the spirit acts on the material organs of his victim, provoking involuntary movements or acts; as is shown in the case of writing mediums, by an incessant desire to write, even at the most inopportune

moments. We have seen a medium, thus enslaved, who, for want of a pen or a pencil, made movements with his finger, as though writing, wherever he happened to be, even in the streets, upon the doors and walls.

Corporeal subjugation sometimes goes still further, and forces its victims to do the most extravagant things. We knew a man, neither young nor handsome, who, under the influence of an obsession of this nature, was constrained, by an irresistible impulse, to throw himself on his knees before a young girl for whom he felt no admiration, and to make her an offer of marriage. At other times, he was forced by a violent pressure on his back and loins, to kneel down, in spite of his strenuous efforts to the contrary, and to kiss the ground, in public places, and in the presence of the crowd. This man passed for mad among his acquaintance; but, most certainly, he was *not* mad; for he was fully conscious of the absurdity of what he was thus made to do against his will, and suffered horribly in consequence.

241. In former days, the term *possession* was employed to express the empire thus exercised over men by evil spirits, when their influence went the length of producing what appeared to be mental aberration. For us, *possession* would be synonymous with *subjugation*. If we do not adopt the term *possession*, it is for two reasons; first, because it implies a belief that there are beings created for evil, and perpetually doomed to evil, whereas there exist, in fact, only beings more or less advanced, all of whom can improve themselves: and, secondly, because the term *possession* implies the idea of a stranger-spirit taking possession of the victim’s body, by a sort of cohabitation with the spirit of his victim, while, in fact, the obsessor’s action is only one of *constraint*. The word *subjugation* expresses our thought perfectly. Therefore, as we hold that no one is *possessed*, in the common acceptation of the word, there exist for us, among the victims of evil spirits, only the three categories of the *obsessed*, the *fascinated*, and the *subjugated*.

242. Obsession, as we have said, is one of the worst stumbling blocks of mediumship, as it is also one of the most frequent; we should therefore do our utmost to combat it, for, besides the personal annoyances to which it may lead, it is an absolute bar to the reception of truthful communications. Obsession being always the result of restraint, and restraint being never exercised by a good spirit, it follows that every communication transmitted by an obsessed medium is vitiated in its origin, and is therefore undeserving of confidence.

243. We may recognize the existence of obsession by the following signs:

(1) The persistence of a spirit in communicating, whether he is wanted or not, by writing, by sounds, by typtology, etc., and his persistence in preventing other spirits from manifesting themselves.

(2) The illusion which, notwithstanding the intelligence of the medium, prevents his seeing the falsity or absurdity of the communications which he receives.

(3) Belief in the absolute identity and infallibility of spirits, who, under respected and venerated names, say false and foolish things.
(4) The medium's confidence in the praises heaped on him by the spirits who communicate through him.
(5) A disposition to shun the presence of those who might give him useful advice.
(6) Offence taken at criticism of communications received by him.
(7) An incessant desire to write, etc., without regard to time and place.
(8) Physical constraint overruling the medium's will, and forcing him to speak and to act in spite of himself.
(9) Persistent noises and other disturbances around the medium, of which he is at once the cause and the object.

244. On considering the dangers of obsession, some people may be inclined to ask, "Is it not a misfortune to be a medium; for is it not this ability which renders obsession possible? In a word, is not the possibility of obsession a proof that spiritism and mediumship are to be regarded rather as dangerous and to be shunned than as a aid to be sought after?" Our answer to this query is as follows; and we beg our readers to weigh carefully what we are about to say.

It is neither by mediums nor by spiritism that spirits have been created; it is spirits who have made both spiritism and mediums. Spirits being only the souls of men, they have necessarily existed as long as men have existed, and they have, consequently, at all periods, exercised a salutary or pernicious influence on the human race. The psychic ability of certain human beings is, for spirits, *only a means of manifesting* themselves; in the absence of this ability, they exercise their influence all the same, but]n other ways, more or less occult. It would therefore be an error to suppose that spirits only influence us through verbal, written, or other manifestations; their influence upon us is perpetual, and those who do not occupy themselves with spirits, or who do not even believe in their existence, are exposed to their influence as all others are, and even more than others, because they possess no counterpoise to their action. Mediumship is, for a spirit, *a means of making himself known to men*, and as, if he is evil, he is sure to betray himself; however hypocritical he may be, we may safely assert that mediumship, so far from bringing us under the power of our enemy, enables us to meet him face to face, if we may so express ourselves, and to fight him with his own weapons. In the absence of mediumship, our enemy acts against us, in the dark; and, under cover of his invisibility, he can do us, and often does, much evil. To how many evil deeds are not men urged, to their sorrow, by evil spirits; deeds which they might have avoided, had they possessed the means of enlightenment as to the nature of the impulsions to which they were yielding! The skeptics know not how truly they speak when they say, of a man who goes obstinately astray: "*That man's evil genius is urging him to his ruin*." A knowledge of spiritism, then, so far from giving power to bad spirits, must eventually destroy their influence over men, by giving to

everyone the means of guarding himself against their suggestions; so that he who falls under their yoke will do so with his eyes open, and will have only himself to blame for his folly.

We may set it down as a general rule that whoever has evil spirit communications or manifestations, of any kind, is under an evil influence; and this influence would affect him whether he were a medium or not, and whether he believed in spiritism or whether he did not. Mediumship gives a man the means of assuring himself in regard to the nature of the spirits who act upon him, and of opposing them if they are evil; and he does this the more successfully, in proportion as he understands the motives from which spirits act.

To sum up: the danger is not in spiritism, since spiritism enables us, on the contrary, to guard ourselves against a danger to which, without it, we are incessantly exposed, while unaware of its existence. The real danger consists in the propensity of many mediums to believe that they are the sole instruments of superior spirits, and in the fascination which blinds them to the absurdity of the statements made through them. But those who are not mediums may incur the same danger, as is shown in the following illustration – A man has, without knowing it, a secret enemy, who spreads abroad the vilest calumnies against him. He finds his affairs going wrong, his friends forsaking him, and his domestic happiness destroyed; for, being unable to discover the hand which stabs him, he cannot defend himself; and succumbs to his unseen foe. But the latter at length writes him a letter in which, despite his Cunning, he betrays his identity and his machinations; and, as he is now discovered, his victim is enabled to confound him, and regains his former position. Such is the part played by evil spirits, and such is the aid which is given to us by spiritism in discovering and defeating their attacks.

245. The motives of obsession vary according to the character of the obsessing spirit. It is sometimes a vengeance exercised on someone by whom he may have been wronged during his last earthly life, or in some previous existence; but it is frequently prompted by the mere desire of doing harm. Some spirits, having suffered, like to make others suffer, and take pleasure in tormenting them; others, again, are amused by the impatience they excite, but usually become tired of plaguing those who bear their teasing patiently. There are spirits who persecute men through sheer hatred and jealousy of what is good; for which reason they often select the best people for their attacks. One of these attached himself like a limpet to an excellent family of our acquaintance, whom he had not, however, the satisfaction of deceiving; when questioned as to his motives for attacking worthy people rather than bad ones, like himself; he answered: "*Bad people do not make me envious*." Other bad spirits are moved by a cowardly desire to take advantage of the moral weakness of people whom they know to be incapable of resisting them. A spirit of this class, who had subjugated a young man of very limited intelligence, when questioned by us as to his

motive for making choice of such a victim, replied: "*I have an itching to torment someone*; *a reasonable person would drive me away*; *I stick to this idiot because he has not the active virtue that would enable him to withstand me*."

246. There are obsessing spirits who are not malicious, but they are usually puffed up with the pride of superficial knowledge. They have their own ideas, their scientific and social theories, their moral and religious philosophies; and, being desirous to inculcate their opinions, they seek out mediums who are sufficiently credulous to accept them blindfold, and whom they fascinate in order to prevent their discriminating between error and truth. These are the most dangerous of all obsessors, because sophistry is easily employed, and, with its aid, the most ridiculous fancies are made to appear worthy of credit; while such sophists, aware of the influence exerted by great names, make no scruple of assuming or borrowing the very highest that may suit their purpose. They seek to impose on those who listen to them by the employment of pompous and pretentious language, bristling with technical terms, or set off with "charity," "morality," etc.; they are careful to give no evil counsels, because to do so would be to betray themselves, and to defeat their object; instead of which they take care that those over whom they hold sway may always be able to uphold them by saying: "You see that they never inculcate anything evil."

Nevertheless, morality with such spirits is only a passport; in reality they care nothing about it, their sole aim being to dominate and to impose their ideas, however extravagant, on all whom they can induce to listen to them.

247. Theorizing spirits are generally wordy and prolix, and strive to make up for deficient quality by superabundant quantity. Nothing pleases them more than to make their mediums write voluminous books, as crude and hollow as pretentious, but which, happily, do but little mischief; being usually unreadable. Writings such as those now alluded to are, however, to be regretted, for the extravagances and eccentricities with which they usually abound not only shock common sense, but are calculated to do harm both by giving to inquirers a false idea of spiritism, and also by furnishing opponents with a handle for turning it into ridicule.

As previously remarked, it often happens that a medium can only communicate with one spirit, who attaches himself to him, and answers for the other spirits evoked by those who make use of him as such. This is not always an obsession; for it may arise from a defect in the flexibility of the medium, or a special affinity between him and the spirit who thus attaches himself to him. There is no obsession, strictly speaking, excepting when a spirit imposes himself on a medium and *drives* other spirits away by an act of his will, which a good spirit never does.

248. The method of combating obsession varies according to the character it assumes. There is no real danger for any medium who is fully aware that he has to do with a deceptive spirit, as is the case in simple obsession; it is merely a very disagreeable thing for him. But it is precisely because *it is*

disagreeable to him that the obsessor is obstinately bent on maintaining his hold upon him. There are two plans that may be followed in such a case first, to prove to the spirit that he will not be allowed to gain the mastery; and, secondly, to tire him out by showing a patience greater than his persistence. If the obsessor sees that he is losing his time, he will usually end by abandoning his attempts.

But this is not always sufficient, and the annoyance may have to be borne for a long time, for some spirits are terribly tenacious, and as such, months and years are of little consequence. The medium who finds himself obsessed, should make frequent and fervent appeals for assistance to his guardian angel, and to all good spirits who are in sympathy with him; and the obsessing spirit must be diverted from his purpose by remonstrance, good counsels, benevolence, and prayer. If really perverse, he will at first mock these efforts, but with persistence, he will eventually see the error of his ways. Obsession therefore affords an opportunity for missionary work; work that is often painful, fatiguing, and even repulsive, but that is all the more meritorious on that account, and often gives satisfaction, as it is an accomplishment and of a work of charity to bring a perverted brother back onto to the path of purification and progress.

It is well to suspend the exercise of mediumship when we perceive that we are being acted upon by an evil or unreasonable spirit, and thus to show him that he is not going to have the pleasure of absorbing our attention aimlessly. The writing medium is able to break off connection with a troublesome spirit by merely abstaining from writing; but the auditive medium is not so fortunate, for, in his case, the obsessing spirit sometimes pursues him incessantly, and even assails him with vile and disgusting utterances against which the unhappy victim of this species of obsession has no means of stopping his ears. It is greatly to be regretted that any human beings should find amusement in the ribald jests of spirits of this description, and should even laugh at their folly and urge them on, instead of imposing silence on them, and endeavoring to bring them to a better mind. But counsel is of little use to those who are bent on drowning themselves.

249. There is, then, in simple obsession, much that is disagreeable, but no danger, for any medium who does not abdicate the use of his reason and common sense, because such a one will not allow himself to be deceived or misled But when mediums are *fascinated*, it is altogether different; for, in that case, the authority usurped by the obsessing spirit over his victim has no limits. The only thing to be done for the fascinated medium is to try to convince him that he is deceived, and to bring him back to a state of simple obsession; but this is never an easy matter, and is sometimes impossible. The ascendancy of the obsessing spirit may be so complete as to render the fascinated medium deaf to every argument, and even to persuade him, when he ventures on some assertion contradicted by positive science, that science is in the wrong. As we have already pointed out, the fascinated

medium generally receives advice with a very ill grace; he is irritated by criticism, and takes a dislike to those who do not share his infatuation. To doubt the superiority of his beloved spirit is a sort of sacrilege in his eyes; and that is just the state of mind which the obsessor desires to maintain on the part of his victim. A spirit of this nature exercised, over a medium of our acquaintance, an extraordinary fascination. We evoked the obsessing spirit, and, after some shuffling, seeing that he could not deceive us as to his identity, he confessed that he was not the spirit whose name he had assumed. To our questions as to why he thus deceived the medium, he replied in these words, which show clearly the character of this class of spirits "*I sought someone whom I could lead by the nose*; *I have found him*; *and I shall stay with him*." "But if we help him to see clearly, he will drive you away." "*We shall see*," was the defiant reply. As "none is so blind as he who will not see," the best plan, when we find it impossible to open the eyes of a fascinated medium, is to leave him to his illusions. The sick man cannot be made whole as long as he hugs his disease, and refuses to follow the wise advice that would cure him.

250. Corporeal subjugation often deprives its victim of the energy necessary for getting the better of his obsession; in such a case, therefore, the intervention of a third person is absolutely necessary, arid may be exercised by mesmerism or by the mere force of will. When the cooperation of the person obsessed cannot be had, the magnetiser must endeavor to obtain an ascendancy over the obsessing spirit; but, as this ascendancy can only be a moral one, it can only be gained by a person who is morally *superior* to the obsessor, his power over whom will be in proportion to the degree of his superiority. It was the moral elevation of Jesus that gave Him boundless power over what, in His day, were called "devils," that is to say, evil and obsessing spirits.

We can only, in regard to this matter, give general counsels; for no physical action is of any use. There is no exorcism, no sacramental formula, that can drive away obsessing spirits. The party obsessed is sometimes wanting in fluidic force; and in such a case, the action of a good hypnotist may prove a useful aid. It is always well, in regard to the cure of obsession, to take counsel of a superior spirit, or of the guardian angel of the person obsessed, through a good medium.

251. The moral imperfections of the obsessed are often an obstacle to their deliverance; as is seen in the following remarkable example, which we here bring forward as being of general application:

Several sisters had been subject, for many years, to depredations of a very unpleasant nature. Their clothes were constantly scattered about in every corner of the house, and sometimes even upon the roof; they were cut, and torn, and holes were made in them, no matter how carefully they had been locked up. These ladies, living in a little provincial town, had never heard of spiritism, and their first idea was, naturally enough, that they were the victims of some malicious practical joke; but the persistency of the

annoyance, notwithstanding the precautions they adopted in the hope of putting a stop to it, soon showed them that this could not be the case. It was not until the annoyance had gone on for some years, that, having heard of spiritism and spirits, they addressed us on the subject, in the hope of learning the cause of the damage thus caused to them and the means of preventing its recurrence, if possible. There could be, to our mind, no doubt about the cause of the annoyance; but to suggest a remedy was a more difficult matter. The spirit who manifested his presence by such acts was evidently animated by a sentiment of hostility; and, in fact, such was found to be the case when we evoked him. He showed himself, moreover, to be exceedingly perverse, and inaccessible alike to persuasion, and counsel. Prayer, however, appeared to exercise a salutary influence over him; but, after a short respite, the depredations complained of began again. We subjoin the communication of a superior spirit consulted by us in regard to these persecutions:

"The ladies thus tormented must entreat their protecting spirits not to abandon them; but they must also examine their consciences, and ask themselves whether they have always practiced *neighbourly charity*; I do not mean the charity which gives alms, but *the charity of the tongue*. Unfortunately for them, they have not yet learned to restrain that member, and therefore do not deserve the deliverance which they desire from the spirit who torments them; for they are much too fond of slandering their neighbours. The spirit who obsesses them does so out of revenge; for, while living, he was their drudge, anti suffered much through their hardness and their exactions. They have only to consult their memory to see who it is that they have to do with.

"Nevertheless, if they set themselves resolutely to amend what is amiss in their daily life, their guardian angels will come back to them, and their presence will suffice to drive away the revengeful spirit whose power is principally in connection with one of them; her guardian angel having been forced to leave her by her indulgence in reprehensible acts anti thoughts. Let these ladies pray fervently for all who suffer; let them practice the virtues required, by God, from everyone according to his condition, and they will be delivered from the obsession that has so long tormented them."

On our remarking that these strictures appeared to its to be rather severe, and that it might, perhaps, be well to soften them before transmitting them to the ladies, the spirit added:

"It was my duty to say what I have said, and in the way in which I have said it; because the people in question do not perceive that they make an evil use of their tongues, although they do so habitually, and to a deplorable degree. It is therefore necessary to give them a warning that may strike home to them."

From the foregoing, we learn a very important lesson, *viz.*, that *our moral imperfections bring us under the power of obsessing spirits, and that the surest method of getting rid of these is to attract good spirits to us by the*

practice of virtue. Good spirits are more powerful than bad ones, and their will suffices to keep off the latter; *but they only assist those who second the action of their will by the efforts they themselves make for their own amendment*; when no such efforts are made, good spirits retire, and their withdrawal leaves the field free to the evil ones, who thus become, in certain cases, instruments of punishment; the higher spirits allowing the lower ones to act, for the accomplishment of this end.

252. We must not, however, attribute to direct spirit-action all the disagreeable things that may happen to us; for our annoyances are often the consequence of our carelessness and improvidence. A farmer once got somebody to write to us, for him, stating that he had been subject, for twelve years, to every sort of mishap with the animals on his farm. All his cows died, or their milk dried up; and all kinds of accidents befell his horses, sheep, and pigs. He had made many efforts to put a stop to these troubles by prayers and devotions continued, according to Catholic usage in such cases, for nine days at a time; but these had had no effect, nor had his affairs been improved by the numerous masses he had paid for, and all the exorcisms he had had performed, by the village priest, in the hope of putting an end to his misfortunes. According to peasant notions, he was persuaded that his animals had been bewitched; and as he probably supposed us to possess a conjuring power greater than that of the village priest, he begged for our advice. Here is the answer we obtained for him from the spirit whom we consulted in regard to the matter.

“The sickness and mortality among the animals belonging to this farmer are due to the fact that his stables, pens, and outhouses are in a foul and unhealthy state, and that he neglects, year after year, to get them cleaned and made wholesome, because *that would cost money*.”

253. We will conclude this chapter by appending, in confirmation of the foregoing statements, the answers given us by spirits to various questions bearing upon the subject we have been considering.

(1) How is it that same mediums are unable to rid themselves of troublesome spirits, and how is it that the good spirits whom they call to their aid are not strong enough to drive away the others, and to communicate directly with the medium?

“There is no lack of power on the part of good spirits; in all such cases, the want of power is on one part of the medium, who is not strong enough to second their action.

Each medium, in virtue of his particular temperament, enters most easily into certain relationships, because his fluid identifies itself with that of one spirit more easily than with that of another. It is this which gives so great a power to the spirits who make a bad use of a medium’s fluid.”

(2) But there are many excellent people, of irreproachable morality, who are prevented from communicating with good spirits, notwithstanding their excellence.

“In such cases, the action of evil spirits, if not an expiation, is permitted as a trial. Can you be sure that there is not still some latent impurity in the secret heart of those people? That pride does not lurk under their seeming excellence? Such testings are intended, by showing to the obsessed his weak side, to help him to the acquisition of humility.

“Can anyone on earth call himself perfect? And are there not always, under the most virtuous exteriors, some hidden faults, some old leaven of imperfection? For example, you say of one who does nothing wrong, who is upright in his social dealings, that he is an honorable and worthy man; but do you know whether the worth of those good qualities is not diminished by secret pride, whether there may not still be some remains of selfishness in him, whether he may not be covetous, jealous, bitter, caluminous, or defective in other ways that you do not perceive, because your intercourse with him has not shown you all the innermost recesses of nature? The surest way of combating the influence of evil spirits is to emulate, as far as possible, the nature of good ones.”

(3) When obsession prevents a medium from obtaining the communication which he desires, is it always a sign of unworthiness on his part?

“I do not say that it is necessarily a sign of unworthiness, but that it shows the existence of some obstacle, moral or other, to those communications. The medium should therefore try to get rid of that obstacle, *which is always in himself*; otherwise, his desires and entreaties will be of no avail. It is not enough for a sick man to say to his physician, “Give me health, I would fain be well!” The physician can do nothing for him unless he, on his part, consents to follow the necessary treatment.”

(4) The privation of communication with certain spirits may, then, be a species of punishment?

“In some cases it is a very real punishment, as the possibility of obtaining such communication is a reward that you should strive to deserve.” (See 220, *Loss and suspension of mediumship*; also *The Spirits’ Book*, p. 195 *et seq*. *Possession*)

(5) May we not also combat the influence of evil spirits by moralizing them?

“Yes; people too often fail to attempt this, but it is exactly what they ought to do; for it is frequently a duty laid upon you, and one that should be kindly and religiously accomplished by you. Your influence may bring them to repentance, and thus hasten their advancement.”

– How can a man possess in such cases more influence than is possessed by good spirits?

“Perverse spirits are nearer to the human beings, to whom they come with the desire to torment them, than to the superior spirits, whom they do their utmost to avoid. When, in their approach to the former, they meet with those whose influence is calculated to make them better, they at first refuse to listen to them, and only laugh at their remonstrances; but if the human being persists judiciously in his effort to act upon them, they usually end by

following his counsels. Elevated spirits are too far above them; they dazzle and terrify them by their splendour. Assuredly men have not more power than the higher spirits, but the influence of men is more consonant with their nature; and superior spirits, on seeing the ascendancy that a man may exercise over inferior spirits, recognize still more clearly the solidarity which exists between heaven and earth.

"A man's ascendancy over spirits is always in proportion to his moral superiority. He can have no mastery over superior spirits, nor over those who, without having arrived at that grade, are good and kind but he can master all spirits who are inferior to himself in moral advancement" (279).

(6) Could corporeal subjugation be carried to the extent of producing madness?

"Yes; a species of madness of which the cause is unknown to the world in general, but which has no connection with ordinary madness. Among those who are treated as *mad* there are many who are only *subjugated*, and whose treatment ought to be exclusively moral; but such patients are often made really mad by the physical treatment to which they are subjected. When your doctors understand spiritism, they will be able to distinguish between these two classes of madness; and they will then cure many more patients than they now do" (221).

(7) What is to be thought of those who, fancying they see danger in spiritism, believe they can prevent it by interdicting spirit-communications?

"It might be possible to prevent individuals from seeking to hold communication with spirits, but it would not be possible to prevent spontaneous spirit- manifestations from occurring to these very people; for spirits can neither be suppressed, nor prevented from exercising their occult power. Those who should attempt such a repression would be like children who put their fingers into their eyes, and suppose that no one can see them. It would be folly to try to suppress what brings with it such great advantages, merely because unwise people may make a bad use of it; the best way to prevent the inconveniences that may result from spiritism, among those who do not understand it, is, on the contrary, to let it be universally known and understood."

CHAPTER 24

Identity of Spirits

Obtainable proofs of identity – Distinguishing between good and evil spirits – Questions on the nature and identity of spirits.

Obtainable proofs of identity.

254. Few questions are more controversial among spiritists, than that of the identity of spirits; because, in point of fact, spirits do not bring us any absolute and irrefragable proof of their identity, and often appropriate to themselves names which are not theirs. For this reason, the question of identity is, next to obsession, the greatest difficulty of practical spiritism; although it must be borne in mind that, in many cases, *absolute identity* is only a secondary matter, of little real importance.

It is especially difficult, and, in some Cases, impossible, to establish the identity of the spirits of personages who lived in ancient times; in regard to these we are reduced to an appreciation based on moral and intellectual considerations, judging of them as we judge of men by their thoughts and their language. For example; if a spirit presenting himself under the name of Plato should say foolish or childish things, it would be very plain that he could not be Plato; but if on the contrary, all that he said were worthy of Plato, and what the spirit of Plato would have no motive for disapproving, there would be, at least, a moral probability of his being Plato himself; although we should have no absolute proof of this. It is especially in cases of this kind that absolute identity is but a secondary question, because if what a spirit says is worthy of the spirit “whose name he takes, the name itself is of little importance. It will doubtless be objected that a spirit who assumes a false name, even though he only says excellent things, nonetheless commits a fraud by so doing, and therefore cannot be a good spirit. The reply to this objection requires an appreciation of various delicate shades not easily distinguished, but which we must nevertheless endeavor to render appreciable by the reader.

255. In proportion as spirits become purified and thereby raise themselves to higher and higher degrees of the spirit-hierarchy, the distinctive characteristics of their personality are merged, so to say, in the uniformity of their perfection, although they none the less retain their personal individuality. This remark applies to those who have attained to the rank of “Superior Spirits,” and, still more, to those who have reached the yet higher rank of “Pure Spirits.” To spirits who have attained these degrees of elevation, the name they bore on earth, in anyone of the thousands of ephemeral *corporeal existences* through which they may have passed, is a very insignificant matter. It is to be remarked, still farther, that spirits are attracted to one another by similarity of qualities; and that they are thus led to form themselves into *sympathetic groups* or *families*, all the members of which, in their intercourse with us, may take the name of anyone of them

who may happen to be known to its. On the other hand, if we consider the immense number of spirits who, since the beginning of time, must have reached the highest spirit-ranks, and if we compare these with the very small number of those who have left a great name behind them on the earth, we see that, among the superior spirits who may be able to communicate with us, the names of the greater number of them must necessarily be unknown to us; but, as we need names, in order to fix our ideas in regard to the spirits who communicate with us, they take the name of some personage in the past, “whose character most resembles their own, in order to fix our ideas in regard to them. It is for this reason that our guardian angels so frequently take the name of someone whom we especially venerate, and for whom we feel especial sympathy. It follows from this fact, that, if anyone’s guardian angel gives himself the name of Saint Peter, for example, it is by no means certain that he is the Apostle so named; it may be he, or it may be a spirit totally unknown to us, but belonging to the family of spirits to which the Apostle Peter belongs; and it follows, still farther, that, under whatever name we invoke our guardian angel, he will come at our call, because it is *our thought* that attracts him, while he is altogether indifferent as to the name we give him.

It is the same whenever a superior spirit communicates spontaneously under any well-known name, for we can have no proof that he is really the spirit of the personage whose name he takes; but, if he says nothing inconsistent with the elevated character of that personage, the presumption may be considered to be in favor of the reality of the identity claimed; and at all events, if he be not the very spirit he claims to be, we may be sure that he is a spirit of the same degree; and, in that case, he may probably have been sent by him. To sum up; the question of names in regard to communications of a general character, is of secondary importance; for, in many cases, the name assumed by a spirit may be considered as a simple indication of the rank he occupies in the spirit hierarchy, or of the category of spirits to which he belongs.

The case, however, is altogether different when a spirit of inferior rank assumes an honored name to gain credit for his statements, a substitution that frequently occurs, and against which we cannot be too much on our guard; for it is by means of these borrowed names, and with the aid of fascination, that system-building spirits, with more conceit than knowledge, seek to disseminate the most erroneous ideas.

The question of identity, as we have said, is of little importance in regard to teachings of a general nature; for spirits of high degree may substitute themselves for one another, without any practical inconvenience for us, because they form a *collective whole*, whose individual members, with few exceptions, are completely unknown to us.

What interests us is not their personal individuality, but the quality of their teachings; and if those teachings are good, it matters little whether he who gives them calls himself Peter or Paul, for we judge him by his quality and

not by his name while, on the other hand, inferior communications are no more rendered acceptable by being made under the assumption of venerated names, than bad wine can be changed into good by the addition of a fine brand. But it is otherwise in regard to communications purporting to come from those whom we have loved; because, in such cases, it is precisely the *individuality*, the *personality*, of the communicating spirit that constitutes for us their interest and worth; and it is therefore with reason that, in regard to all such communications, we make a point of ascertaining, as far as such ascertainment is possible, whether the spirit who responds to our call is really the one with whom we desire to enter into relation.

256. In regard to this point, we have to remark that identity is much more easily established in the case of spirits of our own day, whose character and characteristics are known to us; for it is precisely by these characteristics, which they have not yet had time to throw off, that we are enabled to recognize them, and they, therefore, constitute one of the surest signs of identity. But it must not be forgotten that a spirit, in quitting his earthly body, does not entirely lose the sensitiveness which he felt in the earthly life; we usually find, when questions are addressed to him on a subject, or in a manner, which would not have been permitted by him when in the flesh, that he refuses to answer, or goes away. It cannot therefore be too clearly borne in mind that, in seeking to obtain proof of the identity of a disincarnate spirit, we should abstain from everything that could wound or offend him, as carefully as we should do in regard to spirits in the flesh.

257. But while disincarnate spirits generally refuse to answer indiscreet questions, such as we should scruple to put to people in our present life, they frequently give spontaneous and unquestionable proof of their identity, by their language, by the use of words habitually employed by them, or by recalling events of their life, known to those to whom they come, but unknown to the rest of the company. Proofs of identity are often furnished, too, by many little corroborating circumstances and indications that did not appear at the first attempt of the spirit to communicate with us, but that present themselves gradually, in the Course of successive sittings. It is therefore well to wait for the proofs of identity that the spirit may be able to give us, rather than to attempt to force them from him; attentively observing, meanwhile, all the indications for or against his identity that may result from the nature of the manifestations themselves (See 70).

258. A method of assuring ourselves of the identity of a spirit that is sometimes employed with success, when the Communicating spirit is suspected of having assumed a name which is not his, consists in demanding of him to affirm, in the name of the Almighty, that he is really the spirit he declares himself to be. Though some lying spirits will brave even this test, a great number of those who do not scruple to use a borrowed name recoil from the commission of a sacrilege; and, after having written “I affirm, in the name of” – will stop writing, make vague, unmeaning scratches on the paper, or tear it; or will break, or throw down,

the pencil. A confirmed hypocrite will sometimes elude the question by a mental reservation, and will write, for example: "*I certify that I am speaking the truth*;" or he will perhaps write "*I affirm* in *the name of God*, *that it is really I who am speaking*," etc. But as remarked above, there are many who are less scrupulous, and who will swear to anything. One of these put himself in communication with a medium, stating that he was "*God*;" and the medium. feeling himself immensely honored by such a favor, unhesitatingly believed him. This spirit, evoked by us, did not dare to persist in such an imposture, but said: "I am not God; but I am His son." "Do you mean to say, then, that you are Jesus? But that would hardly seem probable; for Jesus is too high to resort to a subterfuge. Do you dare to affirm, in the name of God, that you are Christ?" – "I do not say that I am Jesus;" replied the silly impostor, I call myself God's son, because I am one of His creatures."

We may safely conclude that the refusal of a spirit to affirm his identity in the name of God is always a proof that the name he has assumed is a false one; but we must bear in mind that even the affirmation of identity in the name of God is only, and in some cases, a presumption of its being true, and by no means an absolute proof of it.

259. We may also include, among the presumptive evidences of identity, the similarity of writing, signature, turns of expression, and other personal peculiarities; but, to say nothing of the fact that it is not given to every medium to obtain these similitudes, it must be remembered that they are not always of themselves a sufficient guarantee of identity; for there are mimics, sharpers, and forgers, in the world of spirits as well as in this one. Similarity of writing etc., considered as a proof of identity, is only valuable as a presumption, and when strengthened by accompanying circumstances. It is the same with all the physical signs that some people regard as talismans not to be imitated by lying spirits. For spirits who dare to commit perjury in the name of God, or to counterfeit a signature, to physical sign can be an obstacle. The best of all proofs of identity is found in the language and tenor of the communications, and in the fortuitous circumstances by which the manifestations are accompanied.

260. It will doubtless be said, that, if a spirit can imitate a signature, he can as easily imitate the language of the person whose name he assumes. This is true; and we have met with spirits who not only assumed the name of Christ, but who imitated the evangelical style and lavished at random the well-known phrase, "*Verily*, *verily*, *I say unto you*;" but when, instead of Christ's grand utterances, we find ridiculous puerilities, we must be thoroughly "fascinated" to be taken in by pretensions so hollow.

The *style* of a speaker or writer may be imitated by inferior spirits, but not *the thought*; ignorance can never imitate knowledge, nor vice, virtue; and, in all such attempted impersonations, the tip of the asinine ear is sure to peep out. Nevertheless, in order to distinguish between truth and falsehood, the medium and the evoker must employ all their perspicacity. They must

understand that perverse spirits are capable of anything arid everything; and that, the higher the name assumed by a spirit, the more suspicious should we be of his veracity. How many mediums have received false and ridiculous communications, made under the pretended sanction of the most venerated names!

Good and Evil Spirits.

261. If the identity of a spirit is, in many cases, only a secondary question of no great importance, the distinction between good and evil spirits can never be unimportant; for, although their *individuality* may, under certain circumstances, be in different to ‘Os, such can never be the case in regard to their *quality*, because it is their quality alone that can give us the measure of the confidence we should accord to them, whatever may be the name they assume.

262. As previously remarked, we must judge of spirits as we judge of men, by their language. Supposing a man receives twenty letters from people unknown to him; by their style, by the thoughts conveyed in them, and by a multitude of other indications, he will distinguish those which are written by educated people from those which come from ignorant ones; he will see, by the peculiarities of each letter, whether its writer is well or ill-bred, whether he is shallow or profound, whether he is proud, serious, frivolous, or sentimental. It is just the same with spirits; ‘we must regard them as correspondents, or interlocutors, whom we have never seen, and ask ourselves what we should think of the knowledge and general character of men who should express themselves in the same way. We may lay it down as an invariable rule, admitting of no exception, that *the language of spirits is always in, accordance with the degree of their elevation*. The communications of really superior spirits are not only excellent, but are always couched in simple and dignified language; and therefore the use of low and unsuitable language, by a spirit, always indicates inferiority on his part, no matter how good may be the intentions implied in it. We need hardly add, that any grossness of language, as of thought, is conclusive proof of a corresponding grossness in the nature of the communicating spirit. The language of a communication always shows its origin, whether by the nature of the thought conveyed, or by the form in which it is given; so that, whenever a spirit tries to deceive us by a pretended superiority, we have only to converse with him a little, in order to appraise him at his true value.

263. Kindness and benevolence are also essential attributes of purified spirits; they have no hatred, either for men or for other spirits; they pity the weaknesses of those who are below them, and, though they criticize their errors, they always do so with moderation, and without bitterness or animosity. If we admit that really good spirits can only desire the good of others, and can only give utterance to kind and noble sentiments, we must

necessarily conclude that language, evidencing a want of kindness or nobility, cannot emanate from a good spirit.

264. Intelligence is far from being a sure sign of moral superiority; for intelligence and morality do not always go hand in hand. One spirit may be good and kindhearted with scanty knowledge; while another may be intelligent and learned, and yet be very little advanced in morality.

People generally seem to suppose that, by questioning the spirit of a man who has been learned in some specialty on earth, they are more sure of getting at the truth in regard to it; but this supposition, though it seems a reasonable one, is not always correct. Experience shows us that scientific men as well as other people, and especially those who have not long left the earth, are still swayed by the prejudices of their terrestrial life, and that they do not immediately get rid of the ideas they have cherished, and which may have lent a halo to their names. It may even happen that, being thus under the influence of their former ideas and theoretic systems, they see less clearly than we are apt to suppose. We are far from laying down this principle as a rule; we only say that such cases have been met with, and that, consequently, a man's having possessed scientific knowledge during his human life is not always a proof of his wisdom as a spirit.

265. By submitting all spirit-communications to a scrupulous examination, and by scrutinizing and analysing the ideas and expressions of spirits as we do in judging the literary work of men, by rejecting everything that runs counter to reason and common sense, everything in contradiction with the character of the spirit who claims to be manifesting, we discourage deceptive spirits, who take themselves off when they find that they cannot deceive us. We repeat it; this method is the only one by which we can distinguish between the Communications of good and of inferior spirits, but it is infallible; for no communication from the latter can stand the test of rigorous examination. Good spirits are never offended by such examination; on the contrary, they advise it, because they have nothing to fear from scrutiny. It is only bad spirits who take scrutiny amiss, and who try to dissuade us from making it, because they are sure to be losers by it; their dissuasion, therefore, proves their inferiority.

Here is a piece of advice on this point given by Saint Louis:

"Whatever may be the confidence legitimately inspired in your mind by the spirits who preside at your meetings, you must never fail to exercise your judgement in regard to every communication that you receive, and must never neglect, when any point appears obscure, suspicious, or doubtful, to ask for the necessary explanations in regard to it."

266. We may sum up the methods of ascertaining the quality of spirits as follows:

(1) Common sense is the sole criterion by which to ascertain the quality of spirits and the value of their communications. Any other criterion, though given by spirits for the attainment of this object, is absurd, and cannot have been suggested by spirits of superior elevation.

(2) Spirits are to be judged of by their language and actions; the latter being the sentiments they inspire and the counsels they give.
(3) It being admitted that good spirits cannot say or do anything but what is good, it follows that nothing evil can proceed from a good spirit.
(4) The language of superior spirits is always dignified, noble, elevated, and free from the least admixture of triviality; they express themselves with simplicity and modesty; they never make a parade of their learning, nor boast of their position in the spirit-world. The language of inferior or commonplace spirits always shows some trace of human passions; every expression indicating ignorance, vulgarity, self sufficiency, arrogance, boastfulness, or acrimony, is a characteristic of inferiority, and also of fraud, if the spirit has presented himself under an honored or venerated name.
(5) While carefully scrutinizing the *style* of spirit-communications, we must also examine their *meaning*, weighing their statements coolly, patiently, and without prejudice. If these are illogical, unreasonable, and unwise, there can be no doubt as to the inferiority of their authors, whatever may be the names assumed by them (224).
(6) The language of elevated spirits is always the same, in meaning, if not in form. Their thoughts are the same, whatever may be the time and place of their transmission; their communications are more or less developed, according to circumstances, needs, and facilities of communication; but they are never contradictory.
If two communications, bearing the same name, are opposed to each other, one of them is evidently apocryphal, and the true one will be that in which NOTHING is in contradiction with the known character of its signer. If; for example, of two communications signed Vincent de Paul, one inculcated union and charity, and the other aimed at producing discord, no man in his senses could hesitate as to which would be the genuine one and which the sham.
(7) Good spirits only state what they know; they are silent, or confess their ignorance, in regard to subjects with which they are unacquainted. Bad spirits talk boldly of everything, regardless of truth. Every scientific heresy, every theory opposed to common sense, betokens fraud on the part of the spirit who is communicating, if he claims to be of high degree.
(8) We may also recognize inferior spirits by their random predictions of future events, and their minute assertions in regard to pretended facts of which we know nothing. Good spirits sometimes give us a hint or a presentiment of future events, when some useful end is to be gained by so doing; but they never, or rarely, give minute details or fix dates; the announcement of some given event, as being destined to occur at a given period, is usually a hoax.
(9) Superior spirits express themselves simply and concisely, and their communications are clear, intelligible, and easily understood; they say much in a few words, for every word they employ has its meaning. Inferior and

shallow spirits, on the contrary, often endeavor to disguise their poverty of ideas under a pompous and inflated style, and are often pretentious, ridiculous, or obscure, while trying to appear profound.

(10) Good spirits never command, never assume airs of authority; they give us counsel, and, if we do not attend to them, they retire. Evil spirits are imperious; they give orders, try to make us obey them, and persist in staying even when bidden to go away. Every spirit who assumes a tone of command betrays his inferiority. Evil spirits are exclusive and absolute in their Opinions, and pretend that they alone speak the truth. They demand a blind credence, and never appeal to reason, because they know that reason would unmask their pretensions.

(11) Good spirits never flatter; they approve what is right, but always with moderation: evil spirits overwhelm us with exaggerated praise; they contrive to stimulate pride and vanity, even while ostensibly preaching humility; and they rarely fail to exalt the *personal importance* of those whom they seek to ensnare.

(12) Superior spirits are above formalities and trifles. Only commonplace spirits attach importance to petty details, incompatible with really elevated ideas. Every petty prescription is a certain mark of inferiority on the part of a spirit, whatever may be the name he assumes.

(13) The assumption of eccentric and ridiculous names by spirits is always to be distrusted, and those who assume them may always be set down as trying to impose on our credulity; it would be absurd to regard such extravagances with respect.

(14) We must be equally on our guard when spirits present themselves under names held in high respect or veneration, for it is especially in such cases that critical examination is necessary; respected and venerated names being too often only a mask intended to deceive us as to the real quality of the spirits by whom they are assumed.

By borrowing great names, inferior spirits often seek to flatter a medium’s vanity; and they then lead him on to regrettable absurdities.

(15) Good spirits are scrupulous of giving us advice in regard to our action in the affairs of our daily life, and only do so for the attainment of some *serious and useful end*. We must never act upon any spirit-advice, unless the advice thus given is entirely approved of by our reason and judgement; in all such cases, we should carefully reflect before following any such advice, or we may expose ourselves to very disagreeable and even dangerous hoaxes.

(16) Good spirits may also be recognized by their prudent reserve in regard to all that could compromise individuals; to unveil evil is repugnant to them, while foolish and malicious spirits delight in bringing it into view. While good spirits endeavor to extenuate, and exhort to indulgence, evil ones exaggerate, blame, and excite discord by perfidious insinuations.

(17) Good spirits only prescribe what is good; no counsel which is not *in strict conformity with the purest evangelical charity* can proceed from them.

(18) Good spirits never make statements that are not in perfect accordance with reason; every suggestion which is opposed to common sense, or to the laws of nature, betrays the inferiority of its origin, and is consequently not to be trusted.
(19) Spirits who are evil, or merely imperfect, betray themselves also by physical indications which cannot be mistaken. Their action on the medium is sometimes violent, producing in him a feverish or convulsive agitation, or causing him to make abrupt and jerking motions; results which offer a marked contrast to the calmness and gentleness produced by the action of good spirits.
(20) Imperfect spirits frequently take advantage of the means of Communication at their disposal for giving perfidious counsels, excite distrust and animosity against those whom they dislike, and direct their animadversions especially against those who are able to detect their inferiority.
They seek out the weak in order to lead them astray; employing, by turns, sophistry, sarcasm, abuse, and even physical violence, as proof of their occult power; they do their utmost to turn them from the path of truth.
(21) The spirits of men who have busied themselves with one single idea or pursuit during their earthly life often remain, for long periods, under the sway of their terrestrial ideas, and retain many of the prejudices, predilections, and even manias, of their earthly life; a fact easily seen in their manifestations.
(22) The knowledge of which some spirits ostentatiously boast is no proof of their real superiority; the unvarying purity of their moral sentiments is the only proof of their elevation.
(23) We cannot arrive at truth simply by questioning a spirit. In the first place, we must know *to whom we are addressing our questions*; for inferior spirits, no matter how ignorant they may be, are often quick to reply, even in regard to the most serious subjects, in spite of their ignorance. Moreover, even if the spirit who replies was learned in earthly science, while in the corporeal life, it does not follow that he is possessed of high scientific knowledge in the world of spirits. *It is only through moral purity that* a *spirit draws nearer to God, and thus extends the circle of his knowledge*.
(24) The pleasantry of superior spirits is often subtle and keen, but never undignified. The satire of spirits of lower degree, who, without being rude, are sometimes fond of bantering, is often both sharp and perfectly to the point.
(25) By a careful study of the characteristics of the spirits who present themselves, *especially as regards their morality*, we ascertain their nature, and the degree of confidence we may safely place in them. People who habitually make use of their common sense are rarely deceived, in regard to spirits, as in regard to men.
(26) In order to judge of spirits, as in order to judge of men, we must have learned to judge ourselves. Many people take their own personal opinions

as the sole standard of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, and condemn whatever contradicts their way of looking at things, their ideas, and the theories they have invented or adopted. Such people are evidently deficient in the rectitude of judgement which is the first condition of a sound appreciation of any subject, but they are not aware of their deficiency, this defect being the one in regard to which illusion is the most frequent and tenacious.

The foregoing directions are derived from experience and from spirit-teachings; we will complete them by giving the answers of spirits to questions addressed to them, by us, in reference to the most important points previously touched upon.

267. Questions as to the nature and identity of spirits.

(1) By what signs can we distinguish the superiority or inferiority of spirits?"

By their language; just as you distinguish a hairbrained man from a sensible one. We have already said that superior spirits never contradict themselves, and only say what is good; they have no other desire than good; it is the aim of all their thoughts and actions.

"Inferior spirits are still under the influence of earthly ideas; their discourse betrays their ignorance and imperfection. Superiority of knowledge, and calmness of judgement, are the exclusive apanage of superior spirits."

(2) Is the scientific knowledge possessed by a spirit always a sign of his elevation?"

No, for if he is still under the influence of matter, he will have retained your vices and your prejudices. There are people in your world who are excessively proud and jealous; do you suppose that they lose these faults directly, on quitting it? No; there remains with them, after their departure from your world, especially in the case of those whose passions were strong, a kind of atmosphere which envelops them, and keeps all those bad things in them just as they were before.

"Spirits who are partially advanced are even more to be dreaded than those who are simply bad, because they often combine intelligence with craftiness and pride. By their partial knowledge, they impose on the unsuspecting and the ignorant, who unhesitatingly accept their false and deceptive theories; and, although these errors cannot eventually prevail against the truth, they none the less do harm for a time, for they fill many mediums with false ideas, and thus impede the progress of spiritism.

Enlightened spiritists, as well as mediums, should do their utmost to separate truth from falsehood."

(3) Many protecting spirits designate themselves by the name of saints or other known personages; what are we to conclude in regard to this point?

"All the saints and other personages whose names are known to you would fail to furnish a protector for every man. There are, among spirits, comparatively few whose names are known on earth, for which reason, spirits frequently decline to give any name at all; but as you always want a

name, they sometimes, to satisfy you, take some name that you already know and respect."

(4) Should not this borrowing of names be regarded as a fraud?

"It would be such if (lone by an evil spirit as a means of deception; but when it is done by good spirits for a good purpose, it is permitted among spirits of the same order, because there is, among them, solidarity and similarity of thought."

(5) So, then, when a protecting spirit calls himself Saint Paul, for example, it is not certain that he is the soul of that apostle?

"Certainly not; for there are thousands of people who have been told that their guardian angel is Saint Paul, or some other well-known personage; but what does it matter to you, if your spirit-protector is of the same rank and character as Saint Paul?

As I said just now, you want a name; and spirits therefore take one by which they may

be evoked and recognized by you, just as you take baptismal names to distinguish you from the other members of your family. They might take the names of the archangels,

Raphael, Michael, etc., without its being of any consequence.

"Besides, the more elevated a spirit is, the wider does his radiation extend; so that a protecting spirit of high rank may really have many thousands of incarnates under his guardianship. You, upon the earth, have lawyers who take charge of the affairs of hundreds of families; why should spirits of high degree be less able to take the moral direction of men, than are your lawyers, to look after your worldly interest?"

(6) Why do the spirits who communicate with us so frequently assume the name of saints?

"They identify themselves with the mental habits of those to whom they speak, and take the names which are most likely to impress each man according to his belief."

(7) Do superior spirits, when evoked, always come in person, or do they, as some people suppose, send proxies charged to transmit their thoughts?

"They come in person when they are able to do so; but, it unable, they send a proxy."

(8) Is the proxy always sufficiently enlightened to answer as well as the spirit who sends him would have done?

"Superior spirits always choose, as their proxies, those who are able to represent them truly. Besides, the higher spirits are, the more intimately are they united in thought; for them, personality is therefore comparatively indifferent, and it ought to be so with you. Do you imagine that there are no other spirits capable of giving you valuable instruction than those whose names are known upon the earth? You are all too prone to fancy yourselves the sole denizens of the universe, and to see nothing beyond the limits of your little world You are too much like savages who, never having left their island, suppose it to be the whole of the world."

(9) We can understand that it should be so, in regard to any important matter; but why do elevated spirits permit inferior ones to assume their names for the purpose of misleading?

It is by no permission of theirs that this is done; does not the same thing occur among yourselves? Those who thus deceive will be punished; you may be sure of that, and also that their punishment will be in proportion to the extent of their imposture. On the other hand, if you were not imperfect, you would have only good spirits around you, and therefore, if you are deceived, it is because you are imperfect, and for that imperfection, and consequent deception, *you alone are to blame*. God permits that it should be thus, in order both to test you, and to enlighten your judgement by teaching you to distinguish truth from error; if you cannot do this, it is because you are not yet sufficiently advanced, and need to learn further lessons from experience."

(10) Are spirits of little advancement, but who are animated with good intentions and the desire to progress, sometimes delegated to supply the place of a superior spirit, in order to give them the opportunity of practicing the art of communication?

"This never occurs in the great spiritist centers; I mean in those whose meetings are conducted in view of general ends. The spirits who present themselves in such centers always do so of their own accord, and some of them come as you say, to exercise themselves in communicating; and it is for this reason that many of the communications received, though good in point of morality, show intellectual inferiority on the part of their writers. Spirits are only delegated for communications of little importance, such as may be called *personal*."

(11) Very weak spirit-communications sometimes contain a few extremely good passages; how are we to explain this anomaly, which would seem to indicate the simultaneous action of spirits of various degrees of advancement?

"Inferior or foolish spirits often take upon themselves to transmit a sentence, without much comprehension of what they are writing about. Are all who write in your world really superior people? No; good and evil spirits do not consort together; it is in the uniform goodness of a communication that the action of superior spirits is shown."

(12) When spirits lead men into error, is it always done intentionally?

"No; there are well-intentioned spirits who are still ignorant, and are themselves deceived; when they have discovered their own insufficiency, they become more prudent, and restrict their statements to what they know."

(13) When a spirit makes a false communication, is it always done with a malevolent intention?

"No; when not himself in error upon the subject he speaks of; a spirit may be frivolous; and may be simply amusing himself by mystifying, without any ulterior aim."

(14) Since some spirits can deceive by their language, can they also assume a false appearance to the preceptions of a clairvoyant medium?
“This is sometimes done, but it is more difficult, and is never allowed to occur except for some important object that the evil spirits themselves do not understand, being employed in such cases by higher spirits as instruments for giving a needed lesson. The clairvoyant medium may see frivolous and lying spirits, as others hear them, or write under their influence. Frivolous spirits may take advantage of the existence of this ability in a medium to deceive him by false appearances; but this depends upon the qualities of the medium’s spirit.”
(15) Do good intentions suffice to preserve us from deception, or are serious inquirers also liable to be deceived?
“The more serious a man is, the less liable is he to be deceived; but every man has some weakness that may attract mocking spirits. People sometimes think themselves strong who are not so in reality; others are unconsciously influenced by pride or prejudice. You do not always take sufficient account of these conditions, which give so dangerous a handle to deceiving spirits, who know that, by flattering your vanity or your prejudices, they are pretty sure to succeed in getting hold of you.”
(16) Why does God permit evil spirits to communicate, and to use this permission for evil ends?
“The communications of the very worst spirits may furnish you with a lesson; it is for you to learn it, and to turn the experience to your profit. Is it not necessary for you to receive all sorts of communications, in order that you may be taught to distinguish between good and evil spirits, and also to hold up a mirror to yourselves?”
(17) Can spirits, by their communications, inspire unjust suspicions, and thus set friends at variance?
“Perverse and jealous spirits can do everything that men do in the way of evil; and you must therefore be constantly on your guard against them. When superior spirits have to find fault, they do so with prudence and moderation; they never speak ill of anyone; when they warn, they do so with gentleness. If; in the interest of both parties, they desire that two people should cease to meet, they bring about some apparently fortuitous incident that will keep them apart in a natural way. Language calculated to excite trouble and distrust is always that of an evil spirit, whatever the name he assumes. You should therefore exercise the utmost circumspection in regard to anything that a spirit may say against any of you, especially if a good spirit has previously spoken well of the same party; you should also distrust yourselves and your prejudices. Accept, of spirit-communications, only what is good, generous, rational, and approved alike by your intellect and your conscience.”
(18) It would appear, from the facility with which evil spirits interfere with communications, that we can never be certain of the truth of any of them?

“Yes; since you have your reason for judging of them. When you read a letter, you can tell, by the letter itself; whether it comes from a low ruffian or well-bred man, from a fool or a philosopher; why can you not do the same when spirits write to you? If you receive a letter from a friend at a distance, what proof have you that it is from him?

His writing and the tenor of his letters,’ you will say. But are there not forgers who imitate all sorts of writing and are there not knaves who pry into everyone’s affairs and yet are there not indications in regard to which you cannot be mistaken? It is the same with regard to spirits. Imagine yourself to be reading a letter from a friend, or the work of some author; and judge all spirit-communications in the same way.”

(19) Could superior spirits, if they would, prevent evil ones from borrowing false names?

“Certainly they could; but the worse spirits are, the greater is their obstinacy, and they often resist the injunctions laid upon them. You must know, too, that there are people in whom superior spirits take more interest than they do in others, and whom, when they judge it to be necessary, they protect from lies; against incarnates who are thus protected, deceptive spirits are powerless.”

(20) What is the motive of this partiality?

“It is not *partiality* but *justice*; good spirits interest themselves thus on behalf of those who profit by their advice, and who labor in earnest for their own amelioration.

Such people are their favorites, and are seconded by them they trouble themselves but little about those whose good resolutions end in words.”

(21) How is it that God permits spirits to commit sacrilege by falsely assuming venerated names?

“You might as well ask why God permits men to lie and blaspheme. Spirits, like men, can use their free will for good or for evil; and the justice of God does not fail in regard to either.”

(22) Are any formulas efficacious in driving away deceptive spirits?

“Formulas are materialities; an earnest thought, directed towards God, is more effectual.”

(23) Some spirits have said that they have the power of executing graphic signs that cannot be imitated, and by means of which their identity may be recognized with absolute certainty; is this true?

“Superior spirits have no other signs for proving their identity than the superiority of their ideas and language. Any spirit can imitate a physical sign. As to inferior spirits, they betray themselves in so many ways that you must be blind to be taken in by them.”

(24) Cannot deceptive spirits simulate the thought of their superiors?

“They could only counterfeit the thought of those above them as theatrical scenery counterfeits nature.”

(25) It is, then, easy to detect fraud by attentive observation?

“Certainly; spirits only take in those who allow themselves to be deceived. But you must have the eyes of the diamond-dealer to distinguish the true gem from the false one; and he who does not know how to do this for himself must go to a lapidary.”

(26) Some people who are weak enough to be imposed upon by pompous language, and who pay more attention to words than to ideas, take false or commonplace statements for something sublime; how are such people, who are not even competent to judge of the works of men, to judge of those of spirits?

“When such people are modest, they recognize their insufficiency, and do not trust to their own judgment; when they are proud, and think themselves clever, they incur the consequences of their vanity. There are people who, though simple and but little educated, are less liable to deception than others who possess intellect and knowledge, but who are vain and self-conceited; for spirits, by flattering the passions of the latter, do just what they please with them.”

(27) Do evil spirits sometimes betray themselves in their communications by involuntary physical signs?

“The skilful ones do not; the unskilled ones often do. Every useless or puerile manifestation or injunction is a certain indication of inferiority; elevated spirits do nothing uselessly.”

(28) Many mediums distinguish between good and evil spirits by the agreeable or painful impressions they experience on their approach. Are disagreeable impressions, such as convulsive agitation or uneasiness of any kind, *always* a proof of the evil nature of the manifesting spirits?

“The medium feels the state of the spirit who comes to him. When a spirit is happy, he is tranquil, lighthearted and calm, and when a spirit is unhappy, he is agitated and feverish, and this nervous agitation naturally affects the nervous system of the medium.

It is the same with yourselves upon the earth; the good man is calm and self possessed, the wicked man is restless and agitated.”

Remark – The nervous impressionability of different mediums varies so greatly that no absolute rule can be laid down in regard to it; and in judging psychic manifestations, as with everything else, we must take the circumstances of each case into account. The painful and disagreeable character of an impression is sometimes an effect of contrasting fluids; for if, when an evil spirit is manifesting, the medium sympathizes with him, he will he but slightly agitated, or not at all.

CHAPTER 25

Evocations

General considerations – Spirits who may be evoked – Mode of addressing spirits – Utility of special evocations– Questions on evocation – Evocation of animals – Evocation of living people – Human Telepathy.

General Considerations.

268. Spirits communicate spontaneously, or come at our call, that is to say, as a result of evocation. Some people think that we should abstain from evoking any given spirit, and should wait for someone to present himself spontaneously; because, say they, when we evoke a spirit previously decided upon, it is by no means certain that the spirit thus evoked will respond to our evocation, while, on the other hand, if a spirit comes spontaneously, he proves his identity by the fact of his desire to converse with us. In our opinion, this view of the subject is a mistaken one; first, because there are always spirits around us, and most frequently of low degree, who ask nothing better than to communicate; and, secondly, because, such being the case, by abstaining from the evocation of a given spirit, we open the door to any and every spirit who desires to enter. In an assembly where no one in particular is called upon to speak, we leave the floor free to everybody; and we know what that comes to. A direct appeal to a spirit previously fixed upon is a link between him and us; we attract him by our desire for his presence, and thus oppose a sort of fluidic barrier against intruders. Without a direct call on our part, few spirits of high degree would have any motive for coming to us; and the probability is that, with the exception of our own familiar spirit, or the spirits of our friends, we should, without such direct evocation, but rarely receive communications from any other than commonplace spirits of comparatively low advancement. But each of the two ways of proceeding referred to has its special advantages, and only becomes objectionable by the exclusion of the other. Spontaneous communications present no difficulties when we are sufficiently at home in the matter to be sure of not allowing inferior spirits to gain a footing among us; and there are cases in which it is well to wait for such, because, the thought of those who spontaneously manifest themselves being under no restraint, they often give us admirable communications; while, on the other hand, it is never absolutely certain that the spirit we evoke will be willing, or able, to give us information in regard to the special topic of which we desire him to treat. The scrupulous examination of direct messages, so constantly recommended by us, is the best protection against false or worthless communications. In the case of regular spiritist meetings, especially of those in which a stated plan of proceeding is adopted, there are always a number of spirits who have formed the habit of attending them, and who, through the regularity of the

sittings, are able to come to them without being called. Such spirits often communicate spontaneously, treating of whatever subject may be under consideration, or giving advice as to what should be done; their presence is easily recognized, either by their language, which is always the same, by their writing, or by various little characteristic peculiarities.

269. If we would communicate with a spirit fixed on beforehand, we must necessarily evoke him (203). If he can come, the answer usually obtained is "*Yes*;" or

"Here I am;" or, perhaps, "*What do you desire of me*?" Sometimes the spirit enters directly upon the subject on which we wish to learn his opinion; replying to the question we had intended addressing to him before we have had time to propound it.

When we evoke a spirit for the first time, it is well to designate him precisely in our evocation; and our mode of addressing him, it is hardly necessary to point out, should be kindly or respectful according to his character, and such as may be calculated to conciliate his sympathy.

270. We are sometimes surprised at the promptitude with which a spirit presents himself when evoked, and even when evoked for the first time, so that it almost seems as though he had been informed beforehand of our intention to evoke him, and had been awaiting our invitation to manifest himself. And this, in fact, is what really occurs when we have been previously thinking of evoking a given spirit, for *our intention*, in such a case, *is a sort of evocation* and, as our familiar spirits are always about us, identifying themselves with our thoughts, they prepare the way for the spirit we are about to evoke, so that, if nothing opposes his coming, it often happens that he is already present when we evoke him. In the contrary case, the familiar spirit of the medium, or that of the evoker, or one of the spirits who habitually attend the meetings, goes to seek the spirit evoked; an operation for which very little time is usually needed.

If the spirit evoked cannot come at once, the messenger (the pagans would have called him *Mercury*) notifies us that there will be a delay of a few minutes, a quarter of an hour, an hour, or, it may be, of several days; and, on the arrival of the spirit evoked, the messenger announces his presence, when we may address our questions to him without further delay. The intermediary of a messenger, however, is not always needed; for the call of the evoker may be heard at once by the spirit, as we shall show further on (282, quest. 5).

Transmission of Thought.

271. Our unvarying habit is to make every evocation in the name of God, and accompanied by an appeal for the Divine protection through the intermediary of our spirit-guides and protectors; and we strongly advise the adoption of this plan of proceeding in all evocations (See *The Gospel explained by Spirits*, Chap. 28, 10, 12, *et seq*). But, in giving this advice, we wish it to be distinctly understood that it should be adopted with the utmost

seriousness, or not at all. Those who would regard that course as being only an unmeaning formality would do better not to attempt to follow it.

272. The evocation of given spirits offers more difficulties for mediums than do spontaneous dictations; and especially when we desire to obtain precise answers to circumstantial questions. For this purpose, it is necessary to have special mediums, who must be at once *flexible and positive*; and we have seen (193) that the last are very rare, for, as previously stated, the necessary fluidic connection is not always established at once between the medium and the spirit who presents himself. Mediums will therefore do well to abstain from sitting for individual evocations until they are sure both of the development of their ability, and of the nature of the spirits who assist them; for, with mediums whose spirit-surroundings are bad, evocations can offer no guarantee of authenticity.

273. Owing to the very natural desire that is usually felt to communicate with those who are dear to us, mediums are much more in demand for evocations of private interest than for communications of general import; and we therefore think it right to offer to them several suggestions of great practical importance. We would advise them not to accede too rashly to this desire on the part of applicants of whose sincerity they are not sure; and to be especially on their guard against ill-disposed people who may be laying a trap for them. 2. Let them be careful not to lend themselves, under any pretext, to any evocation prompted merely by curiosity or worldly interests, instead of a sincere desire for enlightenment on the part of the person who evokes; and let them refuse their aid in reference to any idle question, or one that goes beyond the limits of what we may reasonably ask of spirits. 3. All questions addressed to spirits should be clear, concise, and honest, if we would obtain unequivocal answers. 4. It is also well, in most cases, to decline evoking any spirit in the absence of the party who makes the demand; the presence of that party being usually necessary for putting the incidental questions, and obtaining the subsidiary explanations, that may serve to settle the question of the identity, or otherwise, of the spirit who is replying.

Moreover, the presence of the party desiring to evoke a given spirit is often the principal link in the chain of attraction by which the spirit, sometimes not desirous of communicating, may be drawn to the medium. 5. And lastly, the medium must carefully avoid everything that would tend to transform him into an agent for consultations in regard to worldly affairs, which, in the eyes of many, are synonymous with “fortune telling.”

Spirits who may be evoked.

274. We are at liberty to evoke all spirits, to whatever step of the ladder they belong; the good and the bad those who have lately left the earth, and those who lived here in the remotest ages; the most illustrious, and the most obscure; our relations and friends, and those who are indifferent to us: but it is by no means certain that those whom we evoke will, or can, in all

cases, respond to our call. Besides the refusal that may be prompted by the action of their will, or imposed upon them by a superior power, they may be prevented from answering our call by innumerable causes unknown to us. On the other hand, except in certain cafes which we shall presently point out, there is nothing absolutely and intrinsically opposed to our communicating with any given spirit; the obstacles which may prevent a spirit from manifesting himself being usually of an individual and personal nature, or depending on circumstances.

275. Of the causes that prevent a spirit's manifestation, some, as just remarked, are personal to the spirit himself, while others are extraneous to him.

Among the first are to be placed the occupations or missions in which he may be engaged, and which he may not be able to quit for the purpose of responding to our call; in which case the desired visit, refused for the moment, is only deferred.

The situation of the spirit evoked is also to be taken into the account. Although his reincarnation is not an insuperable obstacle to communication, it is necessarily a hindrance (unless he happens to be asleep), and especially if he is reincarnated in a world of low degree, and is, himself, but little dematerialized.

In the higher corporeal worlds, in which the links that attach the spirit to matter are very slight the manifestation of a spirit during incarnation is almost as easy as in the wandering state, and is always easier than in worlds of which the corporeal matter is more compact.

The extraneous hindrances to a spirit's manifestation consist, principally, in the nature of the medium, in that of the person who evokes, in the surroundings amidst which the evocation is made, and lastly, in the object of the evocation itself. Some mediums receive communications only through their familiar spirits, who may be more or less elevated, while other mediums are able to act as intermediaries for all spirits; this depends on the sympathy or antipathy, the attraction or repulsion, exercised by the spirit of the medium on the spirit evoked, to whom it may be agreeable or repugnant to take him as an interpreter, owing to the special nature or degree of development of the medium's ability. Spirits come more willingly, and express themselves more explicitly, through a medium who they encounter no physical obstacle. Other things being equal as regards moral conditions, the greater the facility with which the medium expresses himself by writing or speaking, the more general do his relations become with the spirit-world.

276. We must also take account of the greater facility resulting from habitual communication with a particular spirit, the latter, in course of time, identifying himself both with the spirit of the medium, and with that of the evoker. A fluidic connection is thus established between them, rendering the work of communication easier and more rapid. Owing to the imperfect connection between them, a first attempt at communication is often unsatisfactory to all parties; in which cases, the spirits themselves

frequently ask to be evoked again. The spirit who comes habitually is, as it were, *at home*; he is familiarized with his auditors and his interpreters, and he therefore speaks and acts more freely.

277. To recapitulate: the possibility, on our part, of evoking any and every spirit, does not imply any obligation, on the part of any spirit, to come at our call. The spirit evoked may, or may not, be able or willing to come to us; he may be able to come to us at one time, and not at another, and through the fluidic assistance of some particular medium or evoker, and not of others. He may come to us for a time; and then, for reasons which he may, or may not be able to explain, he may suddenly cease coming, after having been for a long period a habitual and assiduous visitor.

For the foregoing reasons it is well, when we desire to evoke a spirit for the first time, to begin by asking our protecting guide whether the evocation is possible, or not; when it is not possible, he generally tells us why, and, in such cases, it is useless to insist.

278. Here an important question presents itself, *viz.*, whether it is, or is not, right to evoke evil spirits? To this question we reply, that this depends entirely on the aim we have in view in evoking them, and on our ability to exercise the necessary ascendancy over them. There is no impropriety in our evoking them from a serious motive, in order to instruct them, and to help forward their amelioration; but there is, on the contrary, a very great impropriety in such evocations, when they are made from curiosity or for amusement, or when we put ourselves under the power of the spirits thus evoked by asking of them any kind of favor. Superior spirits, under such circumstances, sometimes permit inferior ones to do what is asked of them; but only to punish severely, at a later period, the rash fool who has dared to invoke them, thus practically attributing to them a power greater than that of God. In vain would such a one flatter himself that, if he makes only a good use of the boon thus obtained, he will be able to dismiss the spirit when the desired service has been rendered; for the service he has solicited and accepted, however small it may be, constitutes *a virtual compact* entered into by him with an evil spirit, and he may rest assured that the latter will not easily let go his hold.

(See The Spirits' Book, 212, Pacts with Spirits).

279. No other ascendancy can be exercised over inferior spirits but that of *moral superiority*. Perverse spirits find their masters among men of sound moral principle; they *wrestle* so to say, by a sort of brute force, with those who can only oppose them by the energy of their will, and they frequently show themselves to be the stronger party.

A person known to us once endeavored to resist a violent spirit using the force of his will; but the spirit said to him "Let me alone, with your duelist's airs, you who are no better than I am! As well might one thief preach up honesty to another thief!"

People are often astonished to find that the name of God, when invoked against bad spirits, is so frequently powerless. Saint Louis explains this fact

in the following reply: “The name of God has no influence over imperfect spirits, unless pronounced by someone whose own excellence enables him to use it with authority; in the mouth of one who has no moral superiority over the spirit, it is only a word, like any other.
The most formidable weapon is inoffensive in the hands of those who have not the skill and the strength to use it.”

Mode of addressing Spirits.

280. The degree of superiority or inferiority of spirits naturally decides the tone which we should adopt in addressing them. It is evident that, the higher they are, the greater is their right to our respect, regard, and attention. We ought not to show them less deference than we should show them if they were still in the flesh, although our deference, in the case of those who have left the earth, is prompted by different motives. In regard to our fellow men, we are more or less influenced by their name and social position; in regard to the denizens of the spirit-world, our respect is prompted solely by their moral superiority. Their elevation raising them above the puerile flatteries of earthly forms, it is not by words that we can win their good will, but by sincerity. It would therefore be absurd to give them the titles which social usage consecrates to the distinction of ranks among ourselves, and which, during their earthly life, may have flattered their vanity; if they are really superior, they not only do not desire this sort of homage, but are displeased by it. A kindly thought is more agreeable to them than any praise; were it otherwise, they would not be above humanity.
The spirit of a venerable and excellent ecclesiastic who, while on earth, was a “Prince of the Church,” but who, nevertheless, practiced the law of Jesus, replied one day to a person who evoked him under the title of “*My Lord*,” “You should, at least, say ‘ex–My Lord;’ for here there is no Lord but God. Know that I see many here who, on earth, went on their knees to me, but to whom I now bow, in all humility!”
As for inferior spirits, their character, also, prescribes the sort of language we should use towards them. Among their number are some who, although inoffensive or even well intentioned, are nevertheless frivolous, ignorant, and giddy; to treat them as we should treat serious spirits is about as reasonable as to take off one’s hat to a schoolboy, or to a donkey with a college cap. A certain amount of familiarity is not out of place with spirits of this description, and is not taken amiss by them; on the contrary, they like it.
Among inferior spirits, there are many who are unhappy. Whatever may be the faults they are expiating, their suffering is a title to our commiseration, and one that is all the more valid because none of us can flatter ourselves with being beyond the application of those words of Christ: “*Let him that is without sin cast the first stone*.” The kindness we show to such spirits is a consolation to them – needing sympathy; they should find in us the same indulgence that we should desire for ourselves.

Spirits who reveal their inferiority by the cynicism of their language, their lies, the baseness of their sentiments, and the perfidiousness of their counsels, are certainly less worthy of our interest than those whose words bear witness to their repentance; still, we owe to them, at least, the pity we bestow upon great criminals, and the best way to silence them is to prove ourselves superior to them. They do not usually intrude their vileness except upon people from whom they have nothing to fear, for perverse spirits recognize their masters in honest men, as they do in superior spirits.

To sum up; just as it would betoken irreverence to put ourselves on an equality with superior spirits, so it would be absurd to treat all spirits with the same deference.

Let us venerate those who are worthy of our veneration; let us be grateful to those who protect and assist us; and let us treat all others with the kindness and forbearance that we may some day need for ourselves. Through the relations into which we are now able to enter with the incorporeal world, we learn to know it; and this knowledge should guide us in our relations with those by whom it is inhabited. The ancients, in their ignorance, raised altars to them, but for us they are only our brethren, more or less advanced: and we raise our altars to God alone.

The utility of private evocations.

281. The communications which we obtain from very superior spirits, whether those of later days, or those who have animated the great personages of antiquity, are precious on account of the high teachings they convey. Those spirits, having attained a degree of advancement which enables them to embrace a vast sphere of ideas and to enter regions beyond the ordinary reach of human thought, are able to initiate us into various mysteries more fully than can be done by spirits of lower degree.

It does not follow from this that the communications of spirits of a lower degree are without utility; on the contrary, the observer may draw much instruction from them. If we would understand the manners of a people, we must study them at every degree of the social scale. To make acquaintance with any nation, we must study all its various classes; just as, in order to learn its history, we must study not only the lives of its kings and its upper classes, but also those of the humblest of its people. Superior spirits are the social grandees of the spirit-world; their very elevation raises them so greatly above us that we are startled at the distance between us. More homely spirits, if we may be allowed to use such an expression, bring the circumstances of their new existence more palpably before us; in their case, the connection between the corporeal life and the spirit-life is more intimate, and we understand it better, because, being revealed to us by those who are nearer to us, it is brought more closely to our thought. On learning from them what becomes of men of all conditions and characters in that other life – what is thought, felt, experienced, in the world beyond the grave, by the virtuous and the vicious, the great and the small, the happy

and the unhappy, of our own time, in a word, by the people who have lived among us, whom we have seen and known, with whose life, habits, virtues, and defects we were personally acquainted – we understand their joys and their sufferings, we make them our own, and we draw from them a moral teaching that is all the more profitable in proportion as the relations between them and us are more intimate. We put ourselves, in thought, more easily in the place of him who has been our equal than in that of one whom we only see amidst a halo of celestial glory. Commonplace spirits show us the practical application of the sublime verities which the superior spirits teach us theoretically. Moreover, in the study of any given subject, nothing that bears upon that subject is useless. Newton deduced the law of gravitation from the analysis of a very simple phenomenon.

The evocation of ordinary spirits has the additional advantage of bringing us into connection with suffering ones, whom we may relieve, and whose advancement we may assist, by our counsels, so that we may thus be useful to others while instructing ourselves. There is selfishness in seeking only our own satisfaction in our communion with spirits; and to refuse a helping hand to the wretched of either world is to give evidence of hardness and of pride. What is the use of a man's obtaining fine communications from elevated spirits, if they do not make him better in himself, and more charitable and benevolent towards his brothers of this world and of the other?

What would become of the hapless victims of war, or of accident, if the surgeons refused to dress their wounds?

282. Questions concerning evocations.

(1) Can spirits be evoked by those who are not mediums?

"Everyone can evoke spirits; and if those whom you call cannot manifest themselves physically, they are none the less near you, and hear your call."

(2) Does a spirit always come when evoked?

"We have already told you that this depends upon the conditions in which a spirit finds himself; there are circumstances under which he may be unable to come."

(3) What are the circumstances that may prevent a spirit from coming at our call?

"His will, in the first place; in the next, his corporeal state, if reincarnated, or, if in the wandering state, the missions with which he may be charged, or the refusal of permission to communicate.

"There are some spirits who can never communicate because, by their present degree of advancement, they belong to worlds still lower than the earth. Those also who are in the spheres of punishment cannot come, unless permission be granted them by a higher power, which is only done for some object of general utility. In order for a spirit to be able to communicate, he must have attained the average degree of advancement of the world to which he is called; otherwise he is unversed in the ideas of that world, and therefore has no connecting, sympathetic link with it. This is not the case

with those who have missions that bring them to your world, or who are undergoing expiation in inferior worlds to which they have been temporarily exiled as punishment for wrongdoing, in your world or in worlds of similar degree; for, in such cases, they possess the ideas necessary for replying."

(4) For what reasons is permission to communicate refused to a spirit?

"As a trial or a punishment, either for the spirit or for him by whom he is evoked."

(5) How can spirits, dispersed as they are in space, or in different worlds, know when they are evoked at some distant point of the universe?

"They are informed of it beforehand by the familiar spirits who surround you, and who go to them, and tell them of your intention; but, in such cases, something occurs which it is difficult to explain to you, because you do not yet understand the mode of transmission of a spirit's thought. All I can tell you is, that the spirit whom you evoke, however distant he may be, receives, so to say, *the impact of the thought addressed to him in your evocation*, and which acts upon his consciousness like an electric shock, attracting his attention to the place from which the thought is addressed to him. He may be said to *hear the thought*, as you, upon the earth, *hear the spoken word*."

– Is the universal fluid the vehicle of thought, as the air is the vehicle of sound?

"Yes, with this difference, *viz.*, that *sound* can only be heard within a very limited circle, while *thought* reaches to infinity. The spirit in space is like the traveler in the midst of a vast plain, who, suddenly hearing himself addressed by name, turns to the point from which the voice proceeds."

(6) We know that distances are of small account with spirits; nevertheless, we are sometimes surprised to find them answering our call as promptly as though they had been close to us and awaiting our call.

"That is sometimes the case, when your evocation was premeditated; because, as we have already told you, the spirit has been made aware of your intention beforehand, and is therefore often present before your evocation has been formally made."

(7) Is the thought of the person who evokes more or less easily heard by the spirit evoked, according to circumstances?

"Certainly; a spirit evoked under the influence of a sympathetic and benevolent sentiment is the more forcibly impressed thereby; the evocation is then like a friendly voice which he recognizes, and when unaccompanied by such a sentiment, it often happens that the evocation *miscarries*. The thought which springs forth from a well directed evocation *strikes* the spirit; but a misdirected evocation is lost in space. It is with spirits as with men; if called by one who is indifferent or antipathetic to them, they may hear, but not heed, his call."

(8) When a spirit is evoked, does he come voluntarily, or because he is constrained to do so?

"He obeys the will of God, that is to say, the general laws which govern the universe; and moreover; 'constrained' is not the right word, for he himself

judges whether it is useful to come, and, in so doing, exercises his free will, a superior spirit always comes when he is called for a useful purpose; he only refuses to answer those who evoke him as an amusement."

(9) Can a spirit refuse to come when evoked?

"Certainly he can; where would be his free will if he could not? Do you suppose that all the beings of the universe are at your orders? Would you consider yourself obliged to reply to everyone who should pronounce your name? When I say that a spirit can refuse to come, I mean, at the *demand of the evoker*; for an inferior spirit may be constrained by a superior spirit to present himself."

(10) Has the evoker any means at his disposal by which he can compel a spirit to present himself against his will?

"Not any, if he be your superior, or even your equal (I refer, here, to equality in *morality*), because you have no authority over such a one; but if he be your inferior in morality, you can constrain him, provided your evocation is intended to promote his welfare; for, in that case, your action will be seconded by other spirits." (279)

(11) Is it improper to evoke inferior spirits, and do we run any risk of placing ourselves in their power by calling them?

"They only lord it over those who allow them to do so. He who is assisted by good spirits has nothing to fear; for he dominates inferior spirits, and they cannot dominate him. But, when alone, and especially when only beginners, mediums should abstain from evocations of this sort." (278)

(12) Is it necessary to bring any particular state of feeling to an evocation?

"The most essential of all states of feeling, when you wish to hold converse with spirits of high degree, is seriousness and concentration of purpose. Faith in God, and the aspiration after goodness, are the most powerful of all evocations as regards superior spirits. By raising the soul towards the higher spheres, through a few moments of serious thought, before evoking, you identify yourselves with spirits of correspondingly higher degrees, and thus dispose them to come to you."

(13) Is faith an indispensable condition of evocation?

"Faith in God is necessary; but faith will follow, if you sincerely desire to advance in knowledge and in virtue."

(14) When men are united in a community of thought and intention, have they a greater power of attracting good spirits by evocation?

"It is when those who evoke are united by charity and goodwill that the best results are obtained. Nothing hinders evocation so much as divergences of thought and feeling on the part of those who evoke."

(15) Is it useful for the latter to form a chain, by holding each other's hands for a few minutes, at the commencement of a sitting?

"The forming of a chain is a physical act which brings no union if such be not already in your thoughts; what is very much more useful is union of thought and purpose, in making your appeal to the higher spirits you desire to attract to your sitting.

You little know what results might thus be obtained by a company of earnest people, free from all feeling of pride and personality, and united by mutual cordiality in a persevering effort of this kind."

(16) Is it better to have stated days and hours for evocation?

"Yes; and, if possible, to hold your sittings in the same place; for spirits then come to you more easily and willingly. The constancy of your desire, as well as its earnestness, aids the spirits whom you call in coming to you and in communicating with you. Spirits have occupations which they cannot always quit and are unprepared for your personal satisfaction. I have said that it is well for the meetings to be in the same place; but you must not suppose this to be absolutely necessary, for spirits come everywhere: what I mean is, that a place selected for the purpose is preferable, because its influence favors concentration of thought on the part of those who assemble there."

(17) Have talismans the property of attracting or repelling spirits, as some people imagine?

"Your question is unnecessary, for you know that matter has no influence over spirits. Be assured that no good spirit ever inculcated any such absurdity, and that the virtue of talismans has never existed except in the imaginations of the credulous."

(18) What are we to think of spirits who make appointments in lugubrious places and at unseasonable hours?

"That they are amusing themselves at the expense of those who listen to them.

It is always useless, and often dangerous, to conform to such suggestions useless, because you gain absolutely nothing by so doing, except being hoaxed; dangerous, not from any harm the spirits may do you, but from the effect which such assignations may have upon your own weak brains."

(19) Are certain days and hours more propitious than others for evocation?

"No physical conditions are of any importance to spirits; to believe in the influence of days and hours is mere superstition. The most propitious time is that in which the thought of the evoker is least preoccupied with his daily affairs, and in which he enjoys the greatest calmness of mind and of body."

(20) Is evocation agreeable or disagreeable to the spirits evoked? Do they come willingly when thus called?

"That depends upon their character and the motive of the evocation. Evocation in view of noble and useful ends, and when the evokers and surroundings are sympathetic, is agreeable to them. For some spirits, communication with men is a very great pleasure; many of them, in fact, are much pained by the abandonment in which they are left by men. But, as I have already said, all this depends on their individual character; for there are misanthropic spirits who do not like to be disturbed, and whose answers, when questioned, betray their ill-humor, especially if they are evoked by people in whom they take no interest. A spirit has no motive for responding to the call of an evoker who is unknown to him, or with whom he

is not in sympathy, especially when the call is prompted by mere curiosity should he come, it will generally be only for a short time, and he most likely will not come at all, unless he sees that some useful end will be served by his coming."

Remark – There are people who only evoke their spirit-friends in order to ask them about the common things of their earthly life; whether they shall buy or sell a house, whether they will make a profit by some commercial speculation, or whether such and such a transaction will turn out advantageously. Our friends and relations in the world beyond the grave only interest themselves in us in proportion to the affection that we feel for them; and if we only think of them as magicians, and to get them to advise us about our worldly affairs, they cannot feel any great sympathy for us, and we should hardly be surprised at any corresponding deficiency of goodwill on their part.

(21) Do good or bad spirits come to us most willingly when we evoke them?

"Bad spirits only come voluntarily in the hope of dominating and deceiving; they come very unwillingly when compelled to do so, and in order that they may be made to avow their faults. Under such circumstances, they would gladly keep away, like schoolboys called up to be punished; but they are sometimes constrained to come, by superior spirits, as a chastisement and means of advancement for themselves, and a lesson for the human beings who evoke them. Evocation for puerile purposes can only be wearisome to superior spirits, who either do not come at all, or soon retire.

"Remember that spirits do not like, any more than you do, to serve as an amusement for the curious. You have often no better purpose in evoking a spirit than to see what he will say, or to ask him particulars in relation to his earthly life, which it is not your business to pry into, and which he has no motive for confiding to you. Do you suppose that a spirit likes to be put into the witness box and cross-questioned at your pleasure? Undeceive yourselves; what a spirit would not have consented to do while on earth he will most likely decline to do as a spirit."

Remark – Experience shows that evocation is always agreeable to spirits, when made for serious and useful ends. The good come with pleasure to instruct us; those who suffer find relief in our sympathy; those whom we have known are gratified by our recollection of them. Frivolous spirits delight in being evoked by the frivolous, because it gives them an opportunity of amusing themselves at their expense; but they are ill at ease with more serious people.

(22) Is it necessary to evoke a spirit in order for him to be able to manifest himself?

"No, spirits very frequently come without being called; which proves that they come voluntarily."

(23) When a spirit comes of his own accord, are we more certain of his identity?

“By no means; deceptive spirits frequently employ this method, in order the better to take you in.”

(24) When we evoke a spirit by our thought, does he come to us, even when there is no manifestation of his presence by writing or otherwise?

“Manifestations are attestations of the presence of a spirit; but it is your thought which attracts him.”

(25) When an inferior spirit manifests his presence, how can we oblige him to retire?

“By paying no attention to him. But how can you expect him to go if you amuse yourselves with his follies? Inferior spirits attach themselves to those who listen to them with complacency, just as is done by foolish people among yourselves.”

(26) Is the making of an evocation in the name of God a guarantee against the intermeddling of evil spirits?

“The name of God does not affect all perverse spirits, though a good many are restrained by it. If employed with faith and sincerity, it will always drive away some of them; and it would keep off a great many more if it were always employed with conviction, and not as a mere formality.”

(27) Can we evoke several spirits at the same time, by name?

“There is no difficulty in doing so; and if you had three or four hands to write with, three or four spirits would answer you at the same time. They do this when several mediums are present.”

(28) When several spirits are evoked at the same time, and there is only one medium present, which spirit replies?

“The one who is most in sympathy with the medium replies for all, by expressing their collective thought.”

(29) Can the same spirit, during a sitting, communicate at the same time by two different mediums?

“Just as easily as a man can dictate several letters at the same time to several amanuenses.”

Remark – We have often known a spirit to reply, at the same time, through two mediums, to the questions addressed to him; in some cases, the answers have been given to one of the mediums in English, to the other in French, both being identical in meaning, and, sometimes, *literal translations* of one another.

Two spirits simultaneously evoked by two mediums can establish a conversation between themselves; although this mode of communication is quite unnecessary for them, since they reciprocally read each other’s thoughts, they sometimes lend themselves to this experiment for our enlightenment. If both are inferior spirits, and therefore still imbued with earthly passions and ideas, they may quarrel and say hard things of one another, each reproaching the other with his faults.

They have even been known, on such occasions, to hurl pencils, planchettes, etc., at one another.

(30) Can the same spirit, when evoked simultaneously in different places, give simultaneous replies to the questions addressed to him?
“Yes, if he is an elevated spirit.”
– In this case, does the spirit divide himself, or has he the gift of ubiquity?
“The sun is one, yet its light radiates in all directions, sending out its rays to incommensurable distances without any subdivision of itself; so it is with spirits. The thought of a spirit is like a spark which throws out its light on all sides, and may be perceived from all points of the horizon. The purer a spirit is, the farther does his thought *radiate*, and the more widely does it spread abroad, like the light. Inferior spirits are too material to effect this wide radiation they can only reply to one person at a time, and cannot come to you if they are answering another call elsewhere.
“A superior spirit, evoked at the same time in two different places, will answer both calls if both are equally serious and fervent; in the contrary case, he gives the preference to the more serious evocation.”
Remark – It is the same with a man, who is able to transmit his thought in various directions, by signals seen from different points, without changing his place.
A spirit spontaneously dictated the following communication at a meeting of the
Parisian Society for Psychological Studies, in which the question of ubiquity had been under discussion:
“You have inquired, this evening, what is the difference of spirits at the different degrees of the hierarchy as regards ubiquity. You may compare us to a balloon rising gradually into the air. While the balloon keeps close to the earth, very few people can see it; in proportion as it rises, the circle of those by whom it can be seen is proportionally enlarged; and when it has attained a still greater altitude, it is visible to a vast number. So it is with us; the action of a low spirit, who is still attached to the earth, is limited to a narrow circle. As he becomes wiser and better, he rises, and can converse with a greater number of people at once; and when he has reached the supreme degree, he radiates in every direction, like the sun, showing himself at the same time, not only to many people, but also in many places.

Channing

(31) Can we evoke the fully purified spirits, those who have terminated their series of incarnations?
“Yes, but they very rarely respond to your call; they communicate only with pure and sincere hearts, never with *the proud and the selfish*; you must therefore beware of the inferior spirits who claim to be of that degree, in order to give you a false idea of their importance.”
(32) How is it that the spirits of the most illustrious men come so familiarly and easily as they sometimes do, at the call of the most obscure evokers?
“Men judge of spirits by themselves, which is a mistake. After the death of the body, terrestrial rank no longer exists; goodness is then the only

distinction among spirits, and the only superiority they recognize among men. Good spirits go everywhere where good can be done."

(33) How soon after death can a spirit be evoked?

"You can evoke a spirit even at the very moment of death; but, as he is then in a state of confusion, he can only reply imperfectly."

Remark – As the duration of the state of confusion varies greatly with different people, there can be no fixed rule in regard to the delay of evocation it is rare, however, for a spirit not to have recovered his self-consciousness sufficiently for replying, by the end of a week or so. He may be able to reply two or three days after death; in any case the attempt may be made, but with caution and gentleness.

(34) Would evocation, at the moment of death, be more fatiguing to a spirit than at a later period?

"In most cases it would be so; for it is like speaking to someone, whom you thereby rouse from slumber, before he is fully awake. There are people, however, who are not annoyed by this; and to whom your call may even be useful by drawing them out of the state of confusion."

(35) How is it that the spirit of a little child can reply to us with full intelligence, when, on earth, he had not even arrived at self-consciousness?

"The soul of an infant is *a spirit confined in the swaddling-clothes of matter*; but when disengaged from matter, he regains the use of his abilities as a spirit, for *age has no existence for spirits*. The fact that the spirit of an infant can answer you like that of an adult proves that he had lived before. Nevertheless, until he is completely disengaged from matter, he may retain some traces of the characteristics of infancy."

Remark – The corporeal influence which may act, for a longer or shorter period, upon the spirit of a child, is equally observable in the case of those who have died insane. The spirit himself is not really insane; but we know that some spirits believe themselves for a time, to be still living in their old flesh-body upon the earth; it is therefore not surprising that, in some cases, the spirit of a madman should fancy that he still feels the pressure of his madness which during life, deprived him of his sanity, and that this illusion should last until he is completely disengaged from the influence of matter. This condition varies between spirits and there are some madmen who recover their lucidity as soon as they have left the body.

283 – Evocation of Animals.

(36) Can we evoke the spirit of an animal?

"After the death of an animal, the intelligent principle which animated it is in a state that may be qualified as *latent*; but it is immediately utilized, by spirits specially charged with that work, for animating new beings, in which new beings the intelligent principle continues the work of its elaboration. Thus, in the world of spirits, there are no wandering spirits of animals, but human spirits only. This statement answers your question."

– How is it, then, that some people who have evoked animals have obtained answers?

“Evoke a rock, and it will answer you. There is always a crowd of spirits about you, ready to speak for everybody and for everything.

Remark – For the same reason, if we evoke mythic or allegorical personages, we shall get a reply; that is to say, there will always be a spirit ready to reply for them, and the answering spirit will assume the character and peculiarities of the personage evoked. One day, someone took it into his head to evoke *Tartuffe*, and *Tartuffe* came at once; and what is more, he spoke of *Orgon*, *Elmire*, *Damis*, and *Valère*, and gave news of them; enacting the hypocrite as exactly as though *Tartuffe* had been a real person! He afterwards stated that he was the spirit of an actor who, when on earth, had performed the part of *Tartuffe*. Frivolous spirits always take advantage of the inexperience of their questioners; but they rarely take the trouble to address themselves to those whom they know to be sufficiently enlightened to discover their imposture, and who are therefore not likely to credit their stories. There are men who do just the same.

A gentleman whom we knew had in his garden a nest of young goldfinches, in which he took much interest. One fine day the nest disappeared. Having satisfied himself that none of his household had taken it, it occurred to him, as he was a medium, to evoke the mother goldfinch. His evocation was promptly responded to, as follows, and in very good

French: “Accuse no one, and make yourself easy about my children. The cat upset the nest when taking a leap; you will find it in the grass, and the young ones too, for the cat did not eat them.” On searching the spot indicated, the nest and the young birds were found exactly as had been stated. Are we to conclude from this fact that it was the spirit of the bird that answered the evocation? Certainly not, it was simply a spirit who knew all about it. This shows how much we must distrust appearances, and how true is the assertion just quoted, “Evoke a rock, and it will answer you.”

284. Evocation of Living People.

(37) Is the incarnation of a spirit an absolute obstacle to his evocation?

“No; but it is necessary that the state of his body, at the moment of evocation, should be such as to allow his spirit to disengage itself immediately. An incarnated spirit comes all the more easily in proportion to the elevation of the world in which he is living, because the body is less material in the higher worlds.”

(38) Can we evoke the spirit of a person now living in our world?

“Yes; just as you can evoke a spirit incarnated in some other world. The spirit of a person living in your world can also, in his moments of liberty, render himself visible to you *without evocation*; that depends on the degree of his sympathy with the parties to whom he manifests himself.” (See 116, *Apparition of the man with the snuff box*)

(39) In what state is a person’s body when his spirit answers to an evocation?

“It is asleep or dozing; it is then that the spirit is freest.”

– Could the body awake during the absence of the spirit?

“No; if something were about to waken the body, which is the spirit’s *home* during his earthly life, he would be forced to return to it; it, at that moment, he were conversing with you, he would suddenly leave you, telling you, perhaps, why he did so.”

(40) How is the spirit, when absent from the body, informed of the necessity of returning to it?

“The spirit of a living body is never completely separated from the latter; however far off he may go, he is always attached to it by a fluidic thread, or link, which serves to recall him to his body when necessary; this thread, or link, is not broken until the moment of death.”

Remark – This fluidic link has often been seen by clairvoyant mediums. It is a sort of phosphorescent trail between the body and the spirit; and when the latter is away from the body, this trail seems to disappear in space. Spirits say it is by means of this trail that they distinguish those who are incarnated from those who are disincarnated.

(41) What would happen if, while asleep, and in the absence of the spirit, the body received a mortal blow? “The spirit would be informed of what was about to happen, and would re-enter the body, before death could occur.”

– It is, then, impossible that the body should die during the absence of the spirit, and that the spirit, on his return, should find, so to say, the door of his fleshly tabernacle closed against him?

“Quite impossible; for it would be contrary to the law which regulates the union of soul and body.”

– But suppose the blow should be struck suddenly and unexpectedly?

“The spirit would be warned of the impending blow before it could be struck.”

Remark – The spirit of a person in the flesh, interrogated upon this point, replied: “If the body could die in the absence of the spirit, *suicide would be too easy*!”

(42) Is the spirit of a person evoked during sleep *as* free to communicate as that of a person deceased?

“No; matter always exerts more or less influence on spirits who are incarnated.

“Remark – A living person, evoked while asleep, and questioned on this subject, replied: “*I am still chained to the bullet that I drag after me*.”

Would this absence of a spirit from his body prevent his coming if evoked?

“It might do so; for instance, it, at the moment of evocation, he were in some place where he wished to remain, the evocation would not bring him, especially if made by someone in whom he took no interest.”

(43) Is it absolutely impossible to evoke the spirit of a person who is awake?

“It is difficult to do so, but it is not absolutely impossible; for, if the evocation *tells*, the person evoked may fall asleep. But a spirit can only communicate, *as a spirit*, at times when his presence is not necessary to the intelligent activity of his body.”

Remark – Experience shows us that an evocation, made while the person evoked is awake, may produce sleep, or, at least, a state of somnolence akin to sleep; but this effect can only be produced through a very energetic willing on the part of the evoker, combined with the influence of sympathy between the evoker and the evoked, as, otherwise, the evocation does not "*tell*." Even should the evocation produce somnolence, if the moment were unpropitious – as, for instance, if the person evoked did not wish to go to sleep – he would resist, or, if he succumbed, his spirit would be troubled, and would find it difficult to reply. The moment most favorable for the evocation of a person in the flesh is during his natural sleep, because his spirit being then relatively free can come to the caller as easily as it can go elsewhere.

When the evocation is made with the consent of the person evoked, and he tries to go to sleep for this purpose, it may happen that the act of evocation troubles him and keeps him from sleeping; on every account, therefore, such evocations should only be made during the natural sleep of the person evoked.

(44) When a person in the flesh is evoked while sleeping, has he, on waking, any consciousness of what has occurred to him?

"No; not in most cases. You are all of you evoked more often than you suppose; but it is usually your spirit only that is aware of the occurrence, which may, however, in some cases, leave on the mind a vague impression as of a dream."

– Who is likely to evoke us if we are only obscure people?

"You may have been widely known in former existences, in this world, or in other worlds; you have many more relations and friends in this world, or in other worlds, than you know of in your waking state, and all these people may evoke you.

Suppose that your spirit, in some former existence, has animated the body of the father of somebody or other in this world or elsewhere, if that other person should evoke his father, it is *your spirit* that would be evoked, and that would answer the evocation."

(45) When the spirit of a person in the flesh is evoked, does he reply as a spirit, or with the ideas of his waking state?

"That depends on his elevation; but, at all events, his judgment will be clearer, and less influenced by prejudices, than in his waking state, for, when answering an evocation, his state is analogous to that of lucid somnambulism; the two states, in fact, are almost the same."

(46) If the spirit of a sleepwalker is evoked while in the magnetic sleep, will he be more lucid than one who is not a sleepwalker?

"He will undoubtedly answer with greater facility, because he is more disengaged from matter; everything depends on the degree of the spirit's independence of the body."

– Could the spirit of a sleepwalker answer the evocation of a person at a distance, while answering another person verbally?

“The ability to communicate simultaneously at two different points is the attribute only of spirits who have passed beyond the influence of matter.”
(47) Would it be possible to modify a person’s waking ideas, by acting on his spirit during sleep?
“Yes, in some cases; the spirit, during sleep, is not so closely bound to matter as when awake, and is therefore more accessible to moral impressions; and these impressions may influence his judgement in the waking state. Unfortunately, however, it often happens that, on waking, the corporeal nature regains the ascendancy, and causes the man to forget the good resolutions that he may have taken, as a spirit, (luring the sleep of his body.”
(48) Is the spirit of a person in the flesh, when evoked, free to speak, or not to speak, as he chooses?
“He has his spirit-abilities, and, consequently, his free will; and as he then has more perspicacity than in his waking state, he is even more circumspect than when awake.”
(49) Could we, by evoking an incarnate while he is asleep, constrain him to tell what, in his waking state, he desires to hide?
“I have told you that a spirit has his free will; but when his body is asleep, he attaches less importance to some things than he does when he is in his waking state, and his conscience may also assert itself more freely. On the other hand, if he does not choose to speak, a spirit can always rid himself of importunities by slipping away; for you cannot hold a spirit as you can hold a body.”
(50) Could not the spirit of a person in the flesh be constrained, by another spirit, to come and speak out, as is done in the case of wandering spirits?
“Among spirits, whether in the flesh or out of it, there exists no other supremacy than that which belongs to moral superiority; and you may be very sure that no superior spirit would lend himself to any such cowardly piece of villainy.”
Remark – Such an abusive attempt would, indeed, be an evil action, but it could not attain the desired result, because it would be impossible to drag from the spirit any secret which he wished to keep to himself, unless, moved by a sense of justice, he should elect to avow what, under other circumstances, he would have kept secret.
A lady, known to us, resorted to this method in order to learn from one of her uncles whether the will of the latter was in her favor. Evoked by her during his sleep, and questioned by her as to whether he had left his property to her, the spirit replied –
“Yes, my dear niece; and you will soon have proof of it. “This was the fact at that time; but, a few days afterwards, the uncle destroyed his will, made another of a different tenor, and was malicious enough to tell his niece that he had done so, although he did not know that he had been evoked by her. An instinctive feeling had urged him, no doubt, to execute a resolution taken by his spirit when the question about his will was put to him by his

niece. It is a base and dastardly thing to ask a spirit, as a spirit, whether in or out of the flesh, what we would not venture to ask him as a man; and it is, moreover, a baseness which has not even the advantage of attaining the result it is intended to compass.

(51) Can we evoke the spirit of an infant during the period of gestation?

"No; at that time the spirit is in a state of confusion too dense for consciousness."

Remark – Incarnation does not take place definitively until the moment when the infant breathes; but, from the instant of conception, the spirit designed to animate a given body is seized with a sort of confusion, which increases with the approach of birth and deprives him of self-consciousness, and, consequently, of the possibility of answering to any call. (See *The Spirit's Book*, Nº 34; *Return to corporeal life*; *Union of soul and body*)

(52) Can a deceptive spirit take the place of the spirit of a person whom we evoke?

"Undoubtedly he can do so; and such substitutions are or very frequent occurrence, especially when the intention of the evoker is not a pure one. But the evocation of people in the flesh is only interesting for purposes of psychological study, and should only be resorted to with a "view to that end."

Remark – If the evocation of wandering spirits does not always *tell* (to make use of their own expression), such failure is still more frequent in the case of spirits who are reincarnated; and it is especially in the latter case that deceptive spirits take the place of those who have been called.

(53) Does the evocation of a person in the flesh present any danger?

"It is not always quite safe, but that depends on the situation of the person evoked; if he is in bad health, his illness may be increased by it."

(54) What are the cases in which the evocation of a person in the flesh is most unadvisable?

"You should never evoke infants, young children, those who are seriously ill, the infirm, or the aged; in short, evocation should never be attempted with anyone whose bodily health is weak."

Remark – The sudden suspension of the intellectual abilities, while a person is awake, would also be a source of danger; especially, if at the moment of evocation, the person evoked were in some situation requiring all his presence of mind.

(55) Does the body, during the evocation of a person in the flesh, experience any fatigue from the action of the spirit while absent from it?

(The following answer to this question was given by a person who, while in this state, asserted that his body was getting tired)

"My spirit is like a captive balloon, fastened to a post; my body is the post, and is shaken by the jerking of the balloon.")

(56) Since the evocation of people in the flesh may prove injurious when attempted without due precaution, might we not unwittingly do harm by evoking a spirit, who, without our being aware. of it, is reincarnated, and

who may therefore not be in a favorable condition for replying to our evocation?
“No, the circumstances are not the same, and the spirit so evoked would not come unless he were in a condition to do so; and besides, have I not told you that you should always inquire of your spirit-guides, before making an evocation, whether it is advisable to do so or not?”
(57) When we feel an irresistible desire to go to sleep at some unsuitable moment, may it not arise from our being evoked in some quarter?
“That may unquestionably be the case, but it is more frequently a purely physical effect; either the body wants rest, or the spirit wants liberty.”
Remark – A lady of our acquaintance, a medium, had, one day, the idea of evoking the spirit of her grandchild, who was asleep in the same room. The identity was conclusively proved, both by the spirit’s language and familiar expressions, and by his exact narration of various things that had happened at his school, when a circumstance occurred which still further confirmed it. The hand of the medium, who was writing under the dictation of the spirit of the child, suddenly stopped, in the middle of a sentence, without her being able to obtain anything further, and, at that moment, the buy, half awakened, moved several times in his bed a few moments afterwards, the boy having again dropped off to sleep, the lady’s hand again wrote as before, continuing the sentence which had been interrupted by the partial awaking of the buy. The evocation of people lit the flesh, conducted under good conditions, affords incontestable evidence of the distinct action of the spirit and the body, and consequently of the existence of an intelligent principle independent of matter.

285 – Human Telepathy.

(58) Could two people at a distance from each other, by reciprocally evoking one another, transmit their thoughts, and thus correspond together?
“Yes; and this human telepathy will one day be the universal method of correspondence.”
Why cannot it be practiced now?
“It might be, by some people, but not by all. Men must *pure* in order for their spirits to disengage themselves from matter; and, until the human race has reached a higher degree of advancement, this power will be confined to a few pure and dematerialized souls, such as are rarely found among the inhabitants of the earth in its present state.”

CHAPTER 26

Questions That May Be Addressed to Spirits

Preliminary observations – Questions that are agreeable or disagreeable to Spirits – Questions about the future – About past and future existences – About moral and worldly interests – About the destiny of Spirits – About health – About inventions and discoveries – About hidden treasures – About other worlds.

Preliminary Observations.

286. Too much importance cannot be attached to the manner of addressing questions to spirits, and to the *nature* of the questions addressed to them. In regard to the questions we address to Spirits, two things are to be considered, *viz.*, their *form* and their *purport*. As regards their *form*, they should be conveyed with method, clearness, and precision; complexity should always be avoided. But there is another point not less important, *viz.*, the order in which our questions should be arranged. When a subject requires a series of questions, it is essential that these should be made to follow one another in regular sequence, so that they may grow naturally out of one another; spirits answer questions, when put in this way, much more easily and clearly than when they are asked at random, jumping abruptly from one subject to another. For this reason, it is always well to prepare our questions beforehand, and only to intercalate, during the sitting, such new ones as may be suggested by the circumstances of the moment. Not only are our questions likely to be better stated by being drawn up when our mind is in a state of repose, but this preparatory labor, as previously remarked, is a sort of *anticipatory evocation*, at which the spirit may himself have been present, and which will have disposed him to respond to our call. Those who adopt this plan will find that the spirit evoked, frequently answers a question as though he had foreseen it; thus proving that he had been aware of it beforehand.

The purport of a question requires even more careful attention than its *form*; for it is often the nature of the question that determines the truth or falsehood of the reply.

There are questions to which spirits, for reasons unknown to us, are unable, or are not permitted, to reply; and, in such cases, it is useless to insist, as the answer, if given, can only be from lower and unscrupulous spirits.

287. As previously remarked, some people think it better not to put any questions to spirits, but to await their spontaneous communications. To the considerations we have already opposed to this view of the matter, we add, that spirits do, undoubtedly, make spontaneous communications which are often of great interest and value, and which it would be wrong to neglect; but there are explanations for which we should have to wait a long time, if we did not elicit them by our inquiries. *The Spirits' Book*, and *The Mediums'*

Book, for instance, would be still to be written, or, at least, would be far less complete, had we not addressed to spirits the questions which, with the answers given to them, we offer in these works to the attention of our readers; and the weighty problems involved in them would be still awaiting the solutions that have been thus obtained in response to our inquiries. The questioning of spirits, carefully, thoughtfully, and respectfully, with a view to obtaining such information as they are able and permitted to give us, is of very great utility. And it Is, moreover, by questioning them closely, that we are able to unmask the deceptive spirits who are so apt to present themselves spontaneously under assumed names, and with pretensions to superior knowledge of which the falsity is thus made apparent.

If what has been already said in the present work has been correctly understood by the reader, some idea of the limits within which questions to spirits should be confined will already have been formed by him; nevertheless, for greater certainty, we now give the statements of various enlightened spirits in reference to the points on which they are usually questioned by beginners.

288. Questions with spirits sympathize, and those with which they do not sympathize

(1) Do spirits willingly answer the questions addressed to them?

"That depends on the questions themselves. Serious spirits always answer with pleasure the questions that you address to them with a view to your moral advancement.

They take no notice of idle questions."

(2) Does the seriousness with which a question is asked suffice to ensure its receiving a serious answer?

"No, for the quality of the answer depends, in part, on the quality of the spirit who replies."

– But does not a serious question drive away frivolous spirits?

"It is not the question that drives them away; *it is the character* of *the questioner*."

(3) What sort of questions are particularly displeasing to good spirits?

"All that are useless or prompted by mere curiosity; they do not answer such questions, but are repelled by them."

– Are there any questions which are specially disagreeable to imperfect spirits?

"None but such as would show up their ignorance and cunning, when they wish to deceive you; in other cases, they answer any and every question, without regard to truth."

(4) What is to be thought of those who only seek, in spirit-communications, for amusement, or for information concerning their worldly interests?

"Such people afford delight to inferior spirits, who, like themselves, want to be amused, and who take pleasure in tricking them."

(5) When spirits do not answer certain questions, is it because they do not choose to do so, or because they are forbidden to do so by a superior power?
“It may be for either reason; there are some things that cannot be revealed to you at present, and others of which the spirits themselves are not cognizant.”
– By insisting strongly, can we always succeed in getting a spirit to reply?
“No; the spirit who does not choose to reply is always able to go away. For this reason you should never persist m trying to make us answer. To insist on having a reply, when the spirit interrogated is not willing to give it, is a sure way to be deceived.”
(6) Are all spirits able to comprehend the questions addressed to them?
“Certainly not. There are many questions which imperfect spirits are incapable of comprehending; but this does not prevent their replying at random, as is done by foolish people in your world.”
Remark – When a useful end is to be gained by so doing, a more enlightened spirit often comes to the aid of an ignorant one. Such help may be easily detected by the different quality of the answers, and also by the admissions of the more ignorant spirit himself. This, however, only happens when the latter is *good*, although ignorant; no such help is ever given to spirits who make false pretensions to knowledge.

289. Questions about the future

(7) Can spirits foretell to us the future?
“If men foresaw the future, they would neglect the present; and yet it is about the future that you are always trying to obtain answers But you are wrong in doing so; for *spirit-manifestation* is not *divination*. If you are absolutely determined to obtain answers about the future, or anything else, *you will get them*; for foolish and deceiving spirits are always ready to answer you. We are perpetually telling you this” (*See The Spirits’ Book*, 868, *Foreknowledge*).
(8) But are not future events sometimes spontaneously foretold, and truly, by spirits?
“A spirit may foresee events which he considers useful to make known, or of which he may be commissioned to inform you; but announcements respecting the future are generally to be distrusted, because they are more often made by deceptive spirits for their own amusement. It is only by a consideration of all the circumstances of the case that you can judge of the degree of confidence to which any prediction is entitled.”
(9) What kinds of predictions are most to be distrusted?
“All that are not of *general* utility. Predictions about personal matters are almost always deceptive.”
(10) What object have spirits in spontaneously announcing events which are not to take place?
“They usually do so to amuse themselves with your credulity and the alarm or satisfaction they occasion. False predictions, however, have sometimes a

more serious object; *viz.*, that of testing him to whom they are made, by showing the good or evil sentiments they excite in his mind."

Remark – Such would he, for example, an announcement that flatters our cupidity or ambition, such as the prospect of an inheritance, etc.

(11) Why do serious spirits, when they predict an event, so rarely fix its date; is it because they cannot, or because they will not, do so?

"It may be for either reason. Spirits feel the approach of an event, and may sometimes give you warning of it; but as to predicting exactly the time when it will take place, they are sometimes not permitted to do so, and sometimes they cannot do so, because they do not know it themselves. A spirit may foresee that an event will happen; but the precise moment of its happening may depend upon conditions not yet
accomplished, and which are only foreseen by the Almighty. Frivolous spirits, who have no scruple in deceiving you, specify days and hours without troubling themselves about the fulfillment of their predictions. For this reason, *circumstantial* predictions are usually to be distrusted.

"We cannot too often remind you that *our mission is to aid your moral progress*, and thus to help you forward on your road to perfection. He who seeks only wisdom from his commerce with spirits will never be deceived. But you must not suppose that we waste our time in listening to your foolishness, telling your fortunes, and assisting you to waste your time; we leave all that to the tricky spirits who amuse themselves with doing so, like mischievous children.

"Providence has placed a limit to the revelations that may be made to men.
Serious spirits keep silence concerning everything that they are forbidden to reveal By insisting on receiving answers to questions which it may not be lawful for us to reply to, you expose yourselves to imposition on the part of inferior spirits, ever ready to seize on any pretext for playing with your credulity."

Remark – Spirits may *foresee* certain future events as a consequence of other events which they see occurring, or of which they may have a *presentiment*. They infer the happening of the events thus foreseen, but within a period of time which they do not measure as we do; and, in order to fix the epoch at which those events will occur, they would have to identify themselves with our manner of calculating the duration of time.

As spirits are often unwilling to do this, apparent errors are of frequent occurrence in the predictions made by them.

(12) Are not some people endowed with a special ability, by which they are enabled to foresee future events?

"Yes; those whose souls have the power of disengaging themselves from matters are able; when thus disengaged, to *see*; and, when such revelations will be useful, they are permitted to reveal certain things. But, of those who make predictions, the majority are impostors and charlatans. The prophetic ability, however, will be more common hereafter"

(13) What is to be thought of spirits who take pleasure in predicting the death of certain people at some stated time?
“Such spirits are malicious jesters, having no other aim than that of enjoying the alarm they create. You should pay no heed to such absurdities.”
(14) How is it that some people are warned by a true presentiment of the time of their death?
“It is usually because their own spirit, in its moments of liberty, has learned its approaching release; and the intuition of this release is retained by them on waking.
People thus prepared for such an intuition are neither frightened nor troubled by it.
They see, in the separation of body and soul, only a change of condition; or, to employ a commonplace metaphor, they look upon it as the exchanging of a coarse and cumbrous garment for a silken robe. The fear of death will diminish in proportion to the spread of spiritist belief.”

290. Questions as to our past and future existences.

(15) Can spirits tell us of our past existences?
“God sometimes, for a special reason, permits those existences to be revealed to you. When such knowledge will conduce to your instruction and edification, the revelation is permitted; but, in such cases, it always comes to you spontaneously, and in some unforeseen manner. *It is never permitted for the satisfaction of mere curiosity*.”
– Why is it that some spirits never refuse to deal in this kind of revelation?
“Because they are mocking spirits who are amusing themselves at your expense.
“In general, *every revelation of this kind which has not an eminently serious and useful end may be set down as false*. Mocking spirits like to flatter your self-love by pretending that you have been rich or powerful in former existences; and there are mediums and believers who accept as gospel everything that is told them on this head, and who cannot see that their present advancement in no way justifies the exalted positions which – through a petty vanity that causes as much amusement to spirits as to men – they fancy themselves to have formerly occupied. It would be more reasonable, more in conformity with the progressive march of beings, and also more honorable to themselves, to suppose that they have *ascended* rather than *descended*. No revelations of this kind are entitled to credence, unless they have come *spontaneously*, and *through several mediums*, *all strangers to each other*, *and ignorant of what may have been previously revealed on the subject*; when these conditions exist, there is good reason for believing the statements thus made.”
– If we may not know our anterior individuality, is it the same in regard to the *kind of existence* we have had, and the good and bad qualities which have been our predominant characteristics in our former lives?

“No; such knowledge is often permitted, because it may tend to your improvement; but, by studying what you now are, you may yourself infer what you have been” (See *The Spirits’ Book*, 392, *Forgetfulness of the Past*).
(16) Can anything be revealed to us about our future existences?
“No; whatever spirits may tell you on this subject is all nonsense, as you may easily see; for your future existence cannot be fixed beforehand, because it will be what you will have made it for yourselves, both by your conduct during your present life on earth, and also by the choice which you will make, in regard to that new existence, when you have re-entered the spirit-world. The less you have to expiate, the more happy will that existence be; but to foreknow the *where* and the *how* of that phase of your career is an impossibility, excepting in the special case (a very rare one) of spirits who are only on your earth for the accomplishment of an important mission, and for whom the road is, so to say, *traced out beforehand*, and may therefore be foreseen.”

291. Questions about moral and worldly interests.

(17) May we ask counsel of spirits?
“Yes, certainly; good spirits never refuse their aid to those who invoke them with confidence, especially in regard to all that concerns the soul; but they repel the hypocrites *who pretend to ask for light*, *while preferring darkness*.
“
(18) Can spirits give us advice on private matters?
“Sometimes; according to the motive of your demand, and the nature of the spirits to whom you apply. Advice concerning private life is best given by familiar spirits, because they attach themselves to individuals, and interest themselves in whatever concerns the individual life of those whom they protect. The familiar spirit is your personal friend, the witness and confidant of your most secret thoughts; but you sometimes weary him with questions so ridiculously stupid that he ends by leaving you.
It is as absurd to ask for advice of an intimate nature from spirits who are strangers to you, as it would be to ask counsel of the first person you met in the street. And you should never forget that *puerility in the questioner* is incompatible with *superiority in the spirit who replies*. You must also take into account the qualities of the familiar spirit himself, who is usually good or bad according to the qualities which cause him to sympathize with the person to whom he has attached himself. The familiar spirit of a bad man is necessarily a bad spirit, and his counsels will naturally be pernicious; but he will be compelled to withdraw and to give up his place to a better spirit, as soon as the man himself begins to improve. Like goes with like.”
(19) May familiar spirits promote our material interests by making revelations to us for that purpose?
“They are sometimes permitted to do so, and they very often assist you, in regard to those interests, as circumstances arise; but be assured that good spirits never lend themselves to the desires of cupidity and of greed. Bad

spirits dazzle you by holding out a thousand temptations, in order to lure you on and to deceive you afterwards.
And you must remember that, if your purification requires you to undergo such and such vicissitudes, although your spirit-protectors may aid you to bear them more resignedly and may sometimes mitigate them, *they are not permitted* – and this for your own sakes, and in view of your best interests in the future – to *deliver you from them*. It is with your guardian angel as with a wise and affectionate father, who neither gives his child all he asks for, nor allows him to shirk a necessary task."
Remark – Our protecting spirits often show us the road we had better take, but without keeping us in leading strings; if they did more than simply counsel us, leaving us free to do or not to do, we should lose our power of initiative and should not dare to take a step without them, which would be prejudicial to our advancement. In order to progress, we need to acquire experience, and often at our own expense; our spirit friends, therefore, even while giving us counsel, leave us to our own resources, as does a skilful teacher in dealing with his scholars. In the ordinary affairs of life, they counsel us by inspiration, and thus leave to us all the merit of our action, when we go right, and all the responsibility of our error, when we go wrong. To ask advice of our familiar spirits, at every moment and in regard to the common affairs of daily life, as is done by some people, is to impose on their kindness, and to mistake the nature of their mission. There are mediums who incessantly appeal to them for a decision in regard to the most trifling things. Such an abuse of mediumship denotes pettiness of ideas on the part of the medium; and it is; more over, presumptuous to suppose that we have a good spirit always at our command, as a servant, and with nothing better to do than to be perpetually looking after the trumpery interests of our earthly lives. On the other hand, such an annihilation of our own judgement, such a reducing of ourselves to a state of passivity, renders our present life profitless, and is therefore prejudicial to our future. If it be puerile to question spirits about futile things, it is no less puerile on the part of spirits to busy themselves about the petty details of our daily life; such spirits may be well-intentioned, but they must evidently be very little above the earthly level.
(20) If one who is deceased has left his affairs in a state of confusion, is it permissible to ask his spirit to assist in getting them into order, and to question him in regard to the property he may have left behind him, in cases when such property is not known, and the information is needed in the interests of justice?
"You seem to forget that death is deliverance from earthly cares; do you suppose that a spirit, who is rejoicing in the recovery of his liberty, will voluntarily come hack and resume his chain, by occupying himself with things that he no longer cares for, in order to satisfy the cupidity of heirs who are perhaps rejoicing in his death, from the hope that it may be to their pecuniary advantage? You talk of justice; but there may be justice in the

disappointment of covetous expectations, as a commencement of the punishment that Providence has in store for all who are greedy of earthly things. On the other hand, the embarrassment sometimes caused you by such a death may be a part of the appointed trials of your life; and, from these, it is not in the power of any spirit to release you, because they have been imposed upon you by the decrees of Providence."

Remark – The foregoing answer will doubtless disappoint those who imagine that spirits have nothing better to do than to serve us as sharp-sighted guides and helpers, not on the road to higher realms of being, but on that of earthly prosperity!

Another consideration lends additional force to this reply. If a man, during his life on earth, has allowed his affairs to fall into confusion through his own want of care, he is not likely to give himself more trouble about them after his death; for, in all probability, he is delighted to be delivered from business worries, and, if he have any elevation of mind, he will attach even less importance to earthly things, now that he is a spirit, than he did when he was a man. As to any property that he may have left, unknown to his heirs, he may have no motive for interesting himself on behalf of people who would perhaps not give him a thought if they did not hope to get something from his estate; and, if we suppose him to be still imbued with human passions, we may even imagine him as taking a malicious pleasure in witnessing their disappointment.

When a spirit thinks it useful to make revelations of this character, either in the interest of justice or from affection for certain people, he makes them spontaneously.

In order to receive such a revelation, it is not necessary to be a medium, nor to have recourse to a medium; for, in such cases, the spirit himself contrives to bring the needed knowledge to the parties concerned, through seemingly fortuitous circumstances; but he is never led to do this by any demand on the part of the people interested, because no demand can do away with the trials appointed by Providence for any human being.

Such demands, on the contrary, would be more likely to aggravate those trials; and, as they would generally be prompted by covetousness, the spirit would see that he is only evoked from greediness and selfishness, and would therefore be all the more indisposed to reply to such an evocation.

292. Questions about the destination of Spirits

(21) May we ask spirits for information concerning their situation in the other world?

"Yes; and they give such information willingly, when the inquiry is dictated by sympathy, or by the desire of obtaining useful knowledge, and not by mere curiosity."

(22) Are spirits permitted to describe their sufferings and their joys?

"Certainly; and these revelations are a most important teaching for you, because they show you the true nature of the rewards and punishments that await you all. By destroying the false notions you have formed to yourselves

on that subject, they tend to revivify your faith and confidence in the goodness of God. Superior spirits rejoice in describing to you their felicity; and the evil ones are often constrained to describe their sufferings, both in order to awaken repentance on their part, and also that they may find relief in so doing, as he who is unhappy in your world is relieved by pouring out his trouble, and by the compassion he thus excites.

"You must never forget that *the essential and exclusive object of spiritism is your moral amelioration*; and that it is for the attainment of this end that spirits are permitted to initiate you into the knowledge of the life to come, thus furnishing you with examples which you may turn to your own profit. The more thoroughly you identify yourselves with the world which awaits you, the less will you regret the one in which you now are. This is, in fact, *the sole aim* of the new revelation."

(23) Can we, by evoking a person about whose fate we are uncertain, learn from himself whether he is still on earth?

"Yes, if uncertainty with regard to his death is not a necessary *trial* for those who are interested in knowing about it."

– If dead, could the person thus evoked make known the circumstances of his death, so that these might be verified?

"If the spirit attached any importance to such circumstances, he might do so; otherwise he would not trouble himself to narrate them."

Remark – Experience proves that, in such cases, a spirit is often not at all excited by any of the motives that may lead people upon the earth to desire to learn the circumstances of his death. If he himself desires to make them known, he does so of his own accord, either through a medium, or by dreams, visions, apparitions, etc., and may thus give the most exact intelligence about himself; on the contrary, a lying spirit may deceive us with perfect ease, and may amuse himself by leading us to fruitless searching or to take other equally useless measures.

It frequently happens that the disappearance of someone whose death cannot be legally proved, throws the affairs of his family into great confusion; yet it is only in very rare and exceptional cases that we have known spirits to put inquirers on the track of the facts concerning which they had been questioned by the survivors. Spirits could, no doubt, clear up all suds mysteries if they chose to do so, or if such action on their part were permitted; but they are never permitted to do so when the embarrassment caused by suds uncertainty is intended as a trial for those who are interested in ascertaining the truth of the matter thus left in doubt. To attempt to recover an inheritance by invoking the aid of spirits is, therefore, to allow one's self to be lured on by chimerical hopes, about which the only point of certainty is the loss of time, effort, and money, incurred in pursuing them.

293. Questions about health.

(24) May spirits give us advice about our health?

“Health being necessary to the accomplishment of your work on earth, spirits are often allowed to occupy themselves therewith, and generally do so very willingly; but, as there are ignorant spirits as well as learned ones, it does not do to address yourselves to the first comer, in regard to this matter, any more than in regard to any other.”

(25) Are we more likely to obtain good advice, if we address ourselves to the spirit of some medical celebrity?

“Terrestrial celebrities are by no means infallible, and they are often influenced by the erroneous ideas of the earthly life; for death does not always deliver you from those ideas immediately. The science of the earth is very slight in comparison with that of the spirit-world. The more elevated a spirit is, the greater is his knowledge; and spirits who are utterly unknown to you may possess science far surpassing that of your scientific men. Besides, science alone does not suffice to make a man a superior spirit; and you would be astonished at the very low place occupied, in the spirit-world, by some of your terrestrial celebrities. The spirit of one of your lights of science, if he has not progressed in goodness as a spirit, “will know no more, in the spirit-world, than he knew when in the earthly life.”

(26) Does a scientific man, on returning to the spirit world, perceive the erroneousness of his scientific errors?

“If he has arrived at a sufficiently elevated degree to comprehend that his development is still incomplete, he perceives his errors, and avows them without hesitation but, if not sufficiently dematerialized, he may still retain some of the prejudices of his earthly life.”

(27) Could a physician, by evoking the spirits of his deceased patients, obtain an insight into the cause of their death, and ascertain the errors he may have committed in his treatment of them; thus advancing his medical knowledge?

“He could do so, and it would be for him a very useful study; especially if he could obtain the assistance of enlightened spirits.

“But to obtain such help, he would need to enter upon his inquiry seriously, assiduously, and with the simple desire of mitigating human suffering; and not as a means of obtaining knowledge and fortune with little trouble.”

294. Questions about inventions and discoveries

(28) Are spirits permitted to guide us in our scientific researches and discoveries?

“The ascertainment of scientific truth is the work of genius; science can only be obtained through labor and effort, for it is through work alone that man advances on his way. Where would be his merit if he had only to interrogate spirits in order to arrive at the possession of knowledge? Every fool, in that case, could become a man of science, at small cost to himself. It is the same with regard to industrial discoveries and inventions. Besides, each new discovery must come at its proper time, and when men’s minds are ripe for it; if men were able to obtain knowledge from advanced spirits,

they would overthrow the order of events by causing fruit to be brought forth before its proper season.
“God has said to the human race: ‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.’
This admirable figure portrays the condition of mankind in worlds of low degree; man must progress, and his progress must be accomplished by the effort of work. If what he needs were given to him readymade, where would be the exercise of his intelligence?
He would be like the idle schoolboy who gets his sum done for him by the clever lad at his elbow.”
(29) But are scientific men and inventors never assisted in their researches by spirits?
“Ah, that is a very different thing! When the time for a discovery has come, the spirits charged with the direction of human progress seek out a man capable of seconding their action, and suggest to his mind the necessary ideas for bringing that discovery to light, but in such a way as to leave to him all the merit of the achievement; for it is he who must elaborate, and bring to bear, the ideas thus suggested. All the great achievements of the human intelligence have been suggested in this way. But spirits leave each man in his own sphere. They do not impart divine secrets to one who is only fit to till the ground; but they draw out of obscurity the man who is capable of seconding the divine designs. You should not allow yourselves to be tempted, by curiosity or ambition, into inquiries that are foreign to the purpose of spiritism, and that can only lead to mystifications and disappointments.”
Remark – A clearer knowledge of spiritism has calmed the feverish eagerness which, in the beginning, led people to flatter themselves that they would be enabled to make all manner of discoveries by its means; some people even going so far as to ask spirits to give them recipes for dyeing and beautifying the hair, for curing corns, etc.!
We have met with many people who fancied that they were about to make their fortune with the aid of spirits, but who only succeeded in making themselves a laughing stock.
It is the same with those who flatter themselves that, with the aid of spirits, they will penetrate the mystery of the origin of things; for there are spirits who, in regard to all such matters, have theories of their own, but theories which are usually no better worth than those of men.

295. Questions about hidden treasures.

(30) Can spirits enable us to discover hidden treasures?
“Spirits of high degree take no interest in such matters; but mocking spirits frequently pretend to indicate treasures which do not exist, or which are in some other place than that in which they cause you to see them. Such deceptions, however, are sometimes useful, by showing you that the true source of fortune is work. If Providence designs a hidden treasure to be

found by someone, it will be found by him in what will appear to him as a natural way; otherwise, it will not be found at all."

(31) Is there any truth in the belief that hidden treasures have their guardian spirits?

"Spirits not yet dematerialized may attach themselves to such things. Misers, who have hidden their treasures, often keep watch and ward over them after death; and the perplexity they feel on seeing them removed is a chastisement for their folly, and one which they are made to undergo until they understand the uselessness of such hoardings. There are also the spirits of the earth, who are charged with the direction of its interior transformations, and who have been allegorically represented as the guardians of natural riches."

Remark – The question of hidden treasures may be placed in the same list with that of lost inheritances; a man must be insane to count upon the pretended revelations that may be made to him by the wags of the other world. As previously stated, when spirits are desirous or able to make revelations of this kind, they do so spontaneously, and without having any need of mediums. Here is an example to the point:

A lady who had lost her husband, after having been married to him for thirty years, was on the eve of being turned out of her house, without resources, by her stepsons, on whom she had lavished the devotion of a mother. She was in the very depths of despair, when, one evening, her husband appeared to her, and told her to follow him into his study, where he showed her his writing desk, which was still under seal, and of which he caused her, by a sort of second-sight, to see the interior. He thus showed her a secret drawer, of the existence of which she had not been aware, and the mechanism of which he explained to her, adding: "I foresaw what has happened, and took care to insure your comfort. In that drawer you will find my will; this house is yours, and I have left you an annuity of …. " He then disappeared. The day the seals were removed, no one could open the drawer. The widow then recounted what had happened to her, and opened the drawer with the aid of the directions given her by the spirit of her husband. The will was found in the drawer; and its contents were exactly what they had been stated to be by the spirit.

296. Questions about other worlds

(32) What confidence may we put in the descriptions of different worlds given us by spirits?

"That depends upon the advancement of the spirits by whom such descriptions are given; for spirits of low degree are just as incapable of giving any such information as an ignorant man would be, among you, of giving you lessons in geography. You frequently ask questions about other worlds to ignorant spirits who know no more about them than you do. If they are well-meaning, they give you descriptions in accordance with their own ideas, whatever these may be; if they are addicted to joking, they amuse themselves by giving you fantastic descriptions drawn from their

own imagination, an ability which they are in full possession of in their wandering state as they were upon the earth, and which supplies them with the various stories that they tell you on all manner of subjects, but that have no foundation in fact. You must not suppose, however, that it is absolutely impossible to obtain from spirit.; true information concerning other worlds. More advanced spirits are happy to tell you of those which they inhabit, in order to aid your progress by descriptions that may decide you to follow the road by which they are reached. Such information is also useful, by fixing your ideas in regard to the future, and thus giving you something more definite than the vague perspective which is all that you have hitherto had in prospect."

– What proof can we obtain of the accuracy of these descriptions?

"The best proof is the agreement of the various descriptions with one another; but you must not forget that they are only given with a view to aiding your moral advancement, and that it is therefore in regard to the moral state of the inhabitants of those globes, rather than in regard to their physical or geological nature, that you may expect to obtain truthful information. In regard to the latter, even if truthful descriptions were given to you, you could not, with your present intellectual abilities, understand them. Such inquiries cannot conduce to your advancement in your present life; and you will have every facility for learning the nature and history of those other worlds when you are living in them."

Remark – Questions concerning the physical constitution and astronomical elements of worlds, belong to the category of scientific researches which spirits ought not to spare us the trouble of making for ourselves, however convenient it might be to our astronomers to make spirits do their calculations for them, although they would probably take good care not to acknowledge any such help!

CHAPTER 27

Contradictions and Hoaxes

Contradictions

297. The adversaries of spiritism do not fail to object that its adherents are far from being agreed among themselves; that they do not all hold the same belief; in short, that they contradict one another. If, say they, your theories are given to you by spirits, how is it that they are not identical? A few simple considerations will reduce this objection to its true value.

Let us begin by remarking that the contradictions referred to are generally more apparent than real, affecting, so to say, the *surface* rather than the *substance* if the subject, and that they are consequently of no vital importance. Such as they are, however, they proceed from two sources, some of them being due to *men*, and others being due to *spirits*.

298. Contradictions of human origin are sufficiently explained in our chapter on *theories* (36), to which we refer the reader. It will be readily understood that, on the first outbreak of modern spiritism, when the whole subject may be said to have been in embryo, many widely different opinions were naturally put forth as to the cause of spirit-phenomena and the inferences to be drawn from them; opinions which, for the most part, have been abandoned, as inquirers have arrived at a more extended knowledge of the matter. With the exception of those who are reluctant to give up opinions which they have originated or espoused, it may be said that, at the present day, the immense majority of spiritists are agreed about principles, at least as regards fundamentals, and that they differ only in regard to a few comparatively unimportant details.

299. In order to understand the cause of contradictions originating with spirits, and to measure the importance of such discrepancies, we must have acquainted ourselves with the nature of the invisible world and studied it on various sides. It may seem astounding, at first sight, that spirits should not all think alike; yet this can surprise no one who considers the infinity of degrees which they have to pass through before reaching the summit of the hierarchy. To suppose that all spirits have the same mental outlook is to suppose the mall to be on the same level of advancement; to attribute to all of them the same clear vision of the truth of things, is to assume that all of them have already attained to perfection; but, spirits being nothing more than human beings stripped of their fleshly envelope, this is not, and cannot be, the case; and, since spirits of every degree are able to manifest themselves, it is evident that spirit-communications must naturally bear the stamp of the ignorance or the knowledge, the moral inferiority or superiority, of those by whom they are made. To distinguish the true from the false, the good from the bad, is the aim of the instructions we have been employed to give in the present work.

It must not be forgotten that there are, among spirits as among men, false pretenders to science, having only a Smattering of knowledge, and others who, proud and presumptuous, are addicted to theory building. As it is only the fully purified spirits who know everything, there are mysteries for the others as there are for men; and there are plenty of spirits who endeavor to explain these mysteries according to their own ideas and opinions, making it a point of honor to urge these explanations upon others, and to defend them in their communications. The mediums of these theorizing spirits are to blame for having made themselves the champions of ideas opposed to common sense; but the contradictory statements that are made by spirits are to be attributed to the diversities of intelligence, knowledge, judgement, and morality observable among those who have not yet reached the elevation which, by giving universal knowledge to all who reach it, unites them all in the same convictions.

300. What is the use of spirit teaching, it may here be asked, if it gives us no more certainty than is given by human teaching? To this question the answer is easy.

We do not accept the statements of all men with equal confidence; and, in choosing between statements that differ from one another, we give the preference to the one of which the author appears to us to be the more enlightened and judicious. We must deal with spirits in the same way. If some of them are not above humanity, there are others who are, and who may give us information that we should seek in vain from the most learned of mankind; and the power of distinguishing between them can only be acquired through the careful study of the principles of spiritist doctrine which we urge upon all inquirers. But the information that we can derive from spirits, even of high degree, has its limits; for, if it is not given to spirits to know everything, still less is such knowledge possible for men There are things, moreover, in regard to which, as previously pointed out, we should question spirits in vain; either because they are not permitted to reveal them, or because they are themselves in ignorance concerning them.

In the latter case, spirits can only express their own personal opinions; and it is just

these personal opinions that spirits with more vanity than science are apt to thrust forward as absolute truth, making the greatest parade of their pretended knowledge, and putting forth the greatest number of contradictory hypotheses, precisely in regard to matters that are hidden from us for the present, such as the developments of futurity and the origin of things (See the preceding chapter).

301. The following explanations have been given to us by spirits in reply to questions respecting the contradictions of spirit-statements:

(1) Is it possible for the same spirit, when communicating in two different centers, to transmit contradictory answers on the same subject?

“If the two centers hold different opinions, the answer may be changed in reaching them, because they are under the influence of different columns of

spirits; the spirit's answers would not be contradictory, but those answers would be modified by the influence of the surroundings through which they are transmitted."

(2) We can understand that an answer may be altered in this way; but when the character of the two centers excludes the possibility of evil influences, how is it that spirits of superior degree appear to make different and contradictory statements about the same subject, to people who are equally earnest in their search after truth?

"Spirits who are really superior never contradict themselves; their statements are always the same in substance, although they may be modified in *form* according to the differences of people and places; but such contradictions are only apparent, being more in the style of expression than in the thought, and the fundamental idea being seen, on reflection, to be the same. But the same spirit may reply differently to the same question according to the degree of advancement of those who evoke him. If a child and a scientific man should ask you the same question, you would answer each of them in the way that he would understand, and that would satisfy him; the two answers would be very different, and yet they would both have the same foundation of truth."

(3) Why do spirits who seem to be serious appear to approve, in the presence of some people, ideas, and even prejudices, which they oppose in the presence of others?

"We are obliged to express ourselves in language that is comprehensible by those we address. When a man has a very strong conviction in regard to any doctrine, even though it be a false one, we can only turn him from this conviction very gently, and little by little; for this reason we sometimes employ *his own terms*, and thus appear to chime in with his ideas, in order not to startle him, and to encourage him to come again to our school.

"It is not well to give too sudden a shock to prejudice; to do so, is, in fact, the surest way to prevent one's self from being listened to; and for this reason spirits often begin, as does every skilful orator, by speaking as though they shared the opinions of their hearers, taking care not to address a Chinese or a Mohammedan as they would a
European or a Christian, because they know that, if they did so, they would certainly meet with a repulse.

"Besides, what appears to you to be a contradiction is often only a partial statement of a truth. All spirits have their task marked out for them by Providence; and they accomplish their several tasks in the ways, and under the conditions, which they consider to be best adapted to advance the improvement of those who receive their communications."

(4) Contradictions, though only apparent, may cause doubt in some minds; by what means, then, can we be certain of arriving at the truth in regard to statements which appear to contradict each other?

"To distinguish truth from error, you must meditate upon the answers we have given, reflecting upon them long and carefully; it is a new field of

knowledge that is opening out before you – a new study, and one that demands much time and labor, like every other.

“Study, compare, go to the very bottom of the subject; truth is only to be purchased at this price. For how are you to arrive at the truth in regard to the vast problems dealt with by spiritism, if you persist in interpreting everything according to your narrow ideas, which you so often mistake for grand ones? The day is not far distant when the teaching of spirits will be universally diffused, and will be as uniform in details as in essentials. The mission of spiritism is to destroy error; but *that* can only be done by degrees.”

(5) There are people who have neither the time nor the aptitude for a deep and serious study of these grave questions, and who accept, without examination, the ideas presented to them by spirits. May not the apparent sanctioning of error by the latter have an injurious effect on minds of this character?

“Let each inquirer *do* what is right and *avoid doing* what is wrong; there are no two doctrines for that. I Goodness is always goodness, whether you practice it in the name of Allah or of Jehovah; for there is but one and the same God for the Universe.”

(6) How can spirits, who appear to be developed in intelligence, entertain, on certain subjects, ideas that are evidently false?

“Spirits, like men, have their own doctrines. Those who believe themselves to be wiser than they are, take their own false or incomplete ideas for truth, just as is so often done by men.”

(7) What are we to think of the doctrine of the mono-spiritists, which asserts that there is only one spirit who *communicates*, and that this spirit is God or Jesus? (38)

“The spirit who inculcates this doctrine is one who desires to domineer over you, and who therefore tries to make you believe that he is the only one who communicates with you; but the unhappy impostor, who thus dares to take the name of God, will pay dearly for his vanity and presumption. Such a doctrine refutes itself, because it is contrary to averred facts; it does not merit serious examination, for it has no root in reality.

“Reason tells you that what is good must proceed from a good source, and what is evil, from an evil one; therefore, as some communications are good, and some are had, how is it possible that they can proceed from the same source? Can a good tree bring forth bad fruit? Did you ever gather grapes from a thornbush, or figs from a thistle?

The diversity of spirit-communications is a conclusive proof of the diversity of their origin. On the other hand, the spirits who pretend that they alone communicate, should explain why other spirits should not be able to do the same. Their pretension is the negation of all that is most beautiful and most consoling in spiritism the relationships between the visible and the invisible worlds, between men and the beings who are most dear to them, but who, if this doctrine were true, would be lost to them for ever. It is the knowledge

of these relationships that identifies man with his future, and detaches him from the material world; to suppress these relationships would be to thrust him back into the state of doubt which is his torment, and to give new strength to selfishness. Examine the doctrine of these spirits, and you will find it to be full of contradictions and absurdities, that show their ignorance of the most evident truths, arid consequently afford unquestionable proof of their inferiority.

(8) One of the most striking of the contradictions to be met with in the communications of spirits is that which relates to reincarnation. If reincarnation is a necessity of spirit-life, how is it that all spirits do not proclaim it?

"Do you not know that there are many spirits whose ideas are limited to the present, as is the case with so many men on earth? They believe that what *is*, according to their present perceptions, will endure for ever; they do not see beyond the circle of those perceptions, and do not trouble themselves as to where they may have come, or whither they may be going; but they will, nevertheless, undergo the law of necessity.

Reincarnation is a necessity about which they do not think until it overtakes them they know that the spirit progresses, but, as to the *mode in which its progress is accomplished*, they know nothing. If you question them on this point, they will tell you of several 'heavens' or 'spheres' placed one above the other, like the storeys of a house, and into which they say that spirits pass progressively; there are some who will even talk of the 'sphere of fire,' the 'sphere of stars,' the 'city of flowers,' the 'city of the elect,' etc."

(9) We admit that spirits who are but little advanced may not comprehend this question; but how, then, does it so often happen that spirits who are notoriously of slight advancement, both morally and intellectually, spontaneously allude to their different existences, and express their desire to be reincarnated, in order that they may redeem their past wrongdoing?

"There are many things in the world of spirits that it is difficult for you to understand. Have you not, among yourselves, people who are very ignorant on certain subjects, and who are, nevertheless, well informed on others? People who have more intuition than learning, just as you have others who have more wit than sound judgement? Besides, do you not know that there are spirits who like to keep men in ignorance, and who take advantage of the readiness with which some people accept their statements, although, if such spirits were met by serious argument, they would soon betray the shallowness of their pretensions?

"You must also take into account the prudence exercised by spirits in the promulgation of truth; too strong and too sudden a light dazzles the eye instead of making it see more Clearly. Spirits may, therefore, in some cases, consider it to be wise to delay the proclamation of this law, making it known gradually, according to times, places, and people. Moses did not proclaim all that has since been proclaimed by Christ; and, of the things taught by

Christ, there were many of which the right understanding, according to His own declaration, was reserved for future generations.
You are astonished that the law of reincarnation has not been proclaimed in all countries; but you must consider that, in a country where the prejudice of color holds sovereign sway, and where slavery is rooted in the customs of the people, the assertion of reincarnation would have sufficed to cause the rejection of spiritism; for the idea that he who is now the master may hereafter become the slave, and that he who is now the slave may hereafter become the master, would have appeared monstrous to its people. Is it not better to get men, first of all, to accept the general principle of intercommunication between spirits and men, leaving them to ascertain, at a later period, the moral consequences of our teachings? How short sighted are men in judging the designs of God! You should remember that *nothing* occurs without His permission, and a specific object that you are often unable to fathom. I have already told you, and I now repeat it, that unity will eventually prevail in spiritist belief. Hold it for certain that such will be the case, and that the differences now existing between you will diminish, little by little, as men advance in clear-sightedness, and will at length disappear altogether; for such is the decree of the Sovereign Will, against which no error can prevail in the long run.
(10) Is not the teaching of erroneous doctrines by spirits calculated to retard the progress of spiritism?
“You would like to have everything without trouble or delay; but you must remember that there is no garden without weeds which must be rooted out by labor.
Erroneous doctrines are a result of the inferiority of your world; if men were perfect, they would attract only high and enlightened spirits. Errors are like sham diamonds that can only be seen to be such by an experienced eye. You must serve an apprenticeship, in order to learn how to tell the true from the false. But even the presentation of false doctrines has its utility; for it serves to exercise your judgement in distinguishing truth from error.”
– But are not those who adopt error kept back by so doing?
“No; for if they adopt error, it is because they are not yet sufficiently advanced to comprehend the truth.”
302. While awaiting the time when unity of belief will have been arrived at, everyone believes himself to be in possession of the truth, maintaining that he alone is right; an illusion which deceptive spirits generally try to keep up in the minds of men.
On what, then, can the impartial and disinterested inquirer rely, as a sound basis of judgement?
“The purest light is that which is not obscured by any cloud; the most precious diamond is the one which is without a flaw; judge the communications of spirits, in like manner, by the purity of their teachings. Do not forget that there are, among spirits, many who have not yet freed themselves from their earthly ideas. Learn to distinguish them by their

language; judge them by the sum of what they tell you; see whether there is logical sequence in the ideas they suggest, whether there is, in their statements, nothing that betrays ignorance, pride, or malevolence, in a word, whether their communications always bear the stamp of wisdom that attests true superiority. If your world were inaccessible to error, it would be perfect, which it is far from being; you have still to learn to distinguish error from truth; you need the lessons of experience to exercise your judgement and to bring you on. The basis of unity will be found in the body of doctrine among the adherents of which good has never been mixed with evil; men will rally spontaneously to that doctrine, because they will judge it to be the truth.

"But what matter a few dissidences of opinion, more apparent than real? The fundamental principles of spiritism are everywhere the same, and should unite you all in a Common bond; that of the love of God and the practice of goodness. Whatever you suppose to be the mode of progression and the normal conditions of your future existence, the aim proposed is still the same, *viz.*, *to do right*; and there is but one way of doing *that*.

"If important difference should arise, you have, even in regard to doctrinal principles, an infallible rule for deciding between them; here is this rule: The best doctrine is that which best satisfies the heart and the reason, and which offers to men the most powerful incentives to well-doing; that doctrine, you may be fully assured, is the one which will ultimately prevail.

Remark – The contradictions presented by spirit-communications may arise from the following causes: ignorance in the case of some spirits; cunning, in that of other spirits, who, from wantonness or malice, say the contrary of what has been stated elsewhere by the spirit whose name they usurp; the will of the communicating spirit, who speaks according to times, places, and people, and who may not consider it prudent to tell everything to everybody; the inadequacy of human language to express things pertaining to the incorporeal world; the imperfection of the means of communication, which sometimes prevents a spirit from fully expressing himself; and, lastly, the different interpretations which may be given to the same word, explanation, or statement, according to the mode of thought, the prejudices, the point of view, of different people. Continuous observation, reflection, and the entire abandonment of self-conceit and preconceived opinions, can alone enable us to arrive at the truth amidst these numerous elements of error.

Hoaxes

303. If it feels unpleasant to be deceived, it is still more so to be hoaxed; happily this is one of the dangers of practical spiritism from which we may most easily preserve ourselves. The ways of confounding the tricks of knavish spirits being implied in all the instructions of the present work, it is unnecessary to enlarge upon the subject. We subjoin, however, a few of the

answers received by us from spirits in conversations concerning the tricks alluded to.

(1) Hoaxes are one of the most disagreeable stumbling blocks of practical spiritism; is there any method by which we may avoid being thus taken in?

"It seems to me that your question is answered by all that we have told you. Yes, certainly, there is such a method, and a very simple one, *viz.*, *to ash from spiritism only what it can or ought to give you*. Bear in mind that *its sole object* is the moral improvement of mankind, and you will never incur deception; for there is but one way of understanding true morality.

"Spirits come to guide you into the path of virtue, but not into that of honors, fortune, or the pampering of your pitiable passions. If you never questioned them about futilities, or about things which they are not permitted to tell you, you would give no handle to deceptive spirits; from which fact you may safely conclude that, in most cases, those who are hoaxed only get what they deserve.

"The duty of spirits is not to give you advice about earthly things, but to help you to insure your welfare in the world to come. When they speak of the things of your present life, it is because they see a necessity for doing so; but they never do so simply at your demand. If you look upon spirit-communications as a substitute for fortunetelling and sorcery, you will assuredly incur deception.

"Again, if men had only to apply to spirits in order to obtain knowledge, they would cease to use their free will, and would not advance on the road marked out for them by Providence. Man must act of himself; spirits are sent to men, not to make straight the path of their human life, but to aid them to prepare the happiness of their future."

– But there are people who ask nothing of spirits, and who are, nevertheless, atrociously deceived by spirits whom they have not evoked, but who come spontaneously.

"If they ask no questions about their worldly affairs, they allow statements to be made to them in regard to those affairs; which amounts to the same thing. If they received with doubt and reserve every statement that oversteps the true limit of spirit communication, they would not be so easily taken in by mischievous spirits."

(2) How is it that God permits sincere acceptors of spiritism to be hoaxed in this way? Are not such deceptions calculated to destroy their belief?

"If their belief could be shaken in this way, it could not have much reality; those who should renounce spiritism on account of such deception would simply show that they (lid not understand it, and that their acceptance had been only superficial. These hoaxes are permitted to try your perseverance, and to punish those who see in spiritism only a means of worldly profit or amusement.

"THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH."

Remark – The cunning of deceptive spirits sometimes passes all imagination.

The art with which they erect their batteries, and combine their attacks, would be a curious study if innocent pleasantries were their sole object; but these mystifications have very painful consequences for those who are not thoroughly on their guard. We have been fortunate enough to open the eyes of many people who have asked our advice, in time to prevent them from compromising themselves by following absurd suggestions maliciously made to them with a view of getting them into trouble of various kinds. Among the means of deception, most frequently resorted to by malicious spirits, are pretended revelations concerning hidden treasures, predictions of legacies, inheritances, etc., the announcement of so-called scientific discoveries, and pretentious theories which explain none of the great problems of life.

In general, as previously remarked, we should distrust all statements which do not come within the legitimate scope of spirit. communication. No advice that is not evidently rational should ever be followed, no matter what may be the name assumed by the spirit who gives it. We could fill a volume with most curious instances of spirit-hoaxes that have occurred within the circle of our own personal observation.

CHAPTER 28

Charlatans

Mercenary Mediumship – Sham Spiritism.

Paid Mediums.

304. As everything can be used for financial gain, it would be strange if attempts were not made to turn spiritism to that purpose; but the spirits would probably be at no loss to show their opinion of such a speculation, should it be attempted, for it is e dent that nothing could be more easily abused by charlatans than such a trade.

On the other hand, it is to be remarked that, although the turning of Psychic ability into a source of gain must lay its genuineness open to suspicion, it would not be a proof that such suspicion is founded; for a medium may possess real psychic aptitude, and employ it with perfect honesty, while receiving payment. Let us see, then, what are the results that may be reasonably hoped for under such circumstances.

305. If our readers have carefully weighed what we have said of the conditions necessary for inducing superior spirits to communicate, of the causes which repel them, and of the circumstances independent of their will that are often an obstacle to their coming, they will see that no medium, whatever his ability or moral worth, could pretend to have them constantly at his beck and call; while, on the other hand, the repugnance of the higher spirits to everything connected with terrestrial aims and interests would indispose them towards any attempt to make a traffic of their manifestations.

306. The same considerations are applicable, not only to mediums who receive payment in money, but to all who turn their abilities to the furtherance of their worldly affairs; for self-interest does not always take the form of seeking pecuniary gain, but is shown as certainly by every sort of contrivance for the furtherance of ambition or of any other personal aim. To sum up: mediumship is a gift given for a high and holy purpose, and spirits of high advancement withdraw from those who make it a stepping-stone to any other ends than those marked out for it by Providence.

307. Physical mediums are not in the same category as those who habitually receive intelligent communications. Physical phenomena is usually produced by lower and less scrupulous spirits; and mediums of this category, who desire to use their gifts for financial gain, may find willing assistants among the spirits with whom they are habitually connected. But the medium for physical effects, like the medium for intelligent manifestations, has not been endowed with this gift merely for his own pleasure. It has been given him in order that he may make a good use of it; should he do otherwise, it may be taken from him, or it may turn to his disadvantage, the lower spirits being always under the orders of the higher ones, who sometimes use them for the punishment of unfaithful mediums.

308. From the preceding considerations we conclude that the most entire disinterestedness, on the part of evokers and of mediums, is the best guarantee against deception; for, although it does not always suffice to insure the intellectual superiority of the communications received, it deprives evil spirits of a powerful means of action and shuts the mouths of detractors.

309. We need give but a few words to the comparatively innocent trickery of those who may be called *amateur charlatans*; that is to say, those who imitate spirit- manifestations for the amusement of an evening party. But, though such trickery may gratify the shallow and frivolous, every attempt of the kind must be regarded as exceedingly reprehensible when made in serious centers, or palmed off upon serious inquirers.

310. It may perhaps be said that a professional medium who gives up his time to the public cannot be expected to do so for nothing; for he must live. True, but even in this case, he must see to it that he carries out his mediumship albeit professionally for the good of spiritism, and not because he regards it as a lucrative calling. Let him never forget that spirits, whatever their superiority or inferiority, are the souls of deceased men and women, and that, while morality and religion prescribe it as a duty to respect the bodily remains of the departed, it is still more incumbent on us to respect their souls. And neither mediums nor those who address themselves to them must ever lose sight of the fact that physical manifestations, as well as manifestations of the intellectual order, are only permitted by Providence for our moral instruction and improvement.

311. While urging attention to these self-evident considerations, we have not the least intention of denying that paid mediums may be found who are both honorable and conscientious. We only refer to those who misuse their gift and it must be conceded that for reasons we have given, such misuse is more likely to occur in the case of paid mediums than in the case of those who, regarding their gift as a talent entrusted to them for high and holy purposes, employ it solely as a means of rendering service to others.

The degree of confidence to be accorded to a paid medium depends, in the first place, on the esteem commanded by his character and morality, and, in the next place, on circumstances. The medium who is prevented from following any other employment, by the fact that he is devoting his time and strength to a work which is eminently useful and advantageous to the community at large, is thereby justified in taking payment for his services and such a medium is not to be confounded with the mere speculator who, from no other motive than the desire of gain, makes a money from his mediumship. The payment of mediums may therefore be condemned, absolved, or favored, according to the *motive* and *aim* of each individual medium; the *intention of the medium*, rather than the *material fact of payment*, furnishing the basis of our judgement.

312. Sleepwalkers who utilize their abilities for pay, the case is not the same, although they also may make bad use of their gift, and although

disinterestedness must always be the best guarantee of sincerity; for their position is a different one, because it is their own spirit which acts, and therefore their ability is always at their own command. The sleepwalker trades only upon himself, and is free to dispose as he chooses of his own action, whereas the mercenary medium trades upon the souls of others.

313. We are well aware that our severity with regard to mercenary mediumship has gained us the ill-will of those who are tempted to make of spiritism a source of worldly gain, and of their friends, who naturally side with them but we console ourselves with the thought that the buyers and sellers in the Temple, who were driven out by Jesus, can hardly be supposed to have regarded His action with complacency.

We have also against us many of those who do not regard the question in so serious a light as is done by us; but if our view of the subject has been adopted by the immense majority of spiritists, it is, doubtless, because their experience has shown them that it is the right one. At all events, we do not see how anyone can maintain that there is not a greater risk of fraud and misuse of mediumship when the latter is made a matter of speculation, than when it is exercised with entire disinterestedness, and if our writings have contributed, in France and other countries, to discredit the turning of mediumship into a trade, we believe it will not be the least of the services they will have rendered to the cause of spiritism.

Sham manifestations.

314. Those who do not admit the possibility of the physical manifestations of spirits, generally suppose their production to be the result of fraud. They found their supposition on the fact that skilful conjurors do things which appear to be prodigies to those who are not in the secret of their tricks and they accordingly conclude that mediums are nothing more than jugglers. We have already refuted this argument, or rather this *opinion*, especially in our articles on Mr. Home and in the *Revue Spirite* of January and February 1858; we will therefore say only a few words on this point before touching on a point still more important.

A consideration which can hardly fail to occur to anyone who reflects upon the subject is this, *viz.*, that, although there are, undoubtedly, conjurors whose skill is really prodigious, they are few in number. If all mediums practiced sleight of hand, it would have to be admitted that the art of conjuring had not only made most wonderful progress in these latter days, but that it had suddenly become exceedingly common, since psychic ability is now found to be innate in people who had no knowledge of its existence in themselves, and even among children.

There are quacks who vend their worthless nostrums in the streets and squares, and even physicians who, without going down into the highways, impose upon the confidence of their patients; but does it follow, from the fact of these abuses, that all physicians are charlatans, and that the whole medical body is unworthy of respect?

Because some dealers sell dyestuffs for wine, does it follow that all wine merchants are adulterators, and that pure wine is not to be found? All things, even the best, are imitated, and to such a point that fraud may even be said to assume in some cases the stamp of genius. But fraud has always a personal object, a material interest, of some kind or other, to compass; where nothing is to be gained, there is no temptation to deceive; and, as we remarked in reference to mercenary mediums, *the best of all guarantees of the genuineness of the phenomena is the absolute disinterestedness of the mediums through whom they occur*.

315. Of all spirit-manifestations, the most easily imitable are the physical phenomena, for reasons which it is well to take into consideration: First, because, from the fact of their being addressed to the eyes rather than to the intelligence, these phenomena are the ones which conjuring can most readily imitate; and, Secondly, because they stimulate curiosity more generally than do the others, and are therefore the ones most likely to attract the crowd, and consequently to be the most lucrative. For both these reasons, charlatans find it most to their interest to simulate this class of phenomena; the spectators, for the most part strangers to spiritism, usually go to such exhibitions for amusement rather than for any serious purpose, and as what amuses pays better than what instructs, amusement is all that the charlatan provides for them.

But there is yet another argument still more peremptory. Conjuring can imitate certain physical manifestations, for which nothing more than address is required; but it has not, up to the present time, been able to simulate, for instance, the gift of improvisation, which, in fact, requires an amount of intelligence quite above the common level, nor to produce the grand and sublime dictations, so admirably appropriate as regards time and place, which are often given by spirits. Here is a fact illustrative of the foregoing assertion:

A well-known literary man once came to see us, stating that he was a good intuitive writing-medium, and would be happy to join the Spiritist Society. As it was a rule with us not to admit to our meetings any mediums but those whose abilities were already known to us, we begged him to give us an opportunity of witnessing his mediumship at a private meeting. He assented to this request, and came to the meeting proposed, where a number of excellent mediums were assembled, some of whom gave dissertations of great interest, while others gave answers of remarkable precision to questions relating in some cases to subjects unknown to them. When this gentleman’s turn came to read the communication received by him, he read off a few insignificant words, remarked that “he was not up to the mark that day,” and made a hasty retreat. He had probably discovered that, to play the part of a medium for intellectual manifestations was very much more difficult than he had supposed; for, from that time, we saw no more of him.

316. It is always those who do not understand a matter that are most easily deceived in regard to it. It is so with spiritism; those who know nothing

about it are easily led away by appearances, while those who have made an attentive study of the subject *beforehand*, understand not only the cause of the phenomena they witness, but the conditions under which they may be produced, and are thus furnished with the means of detecting fraud if such should be attempted.

317. Sham mediums are stigmatized, as they deserve to be, in the following letter, which we quote from the *Revue Spirite* of August 1861:

PARIS, July 21*st*, 1861.

"SIR – I have read in the last number of the *Revue Spirite* your remarks in reference to fraudulent imitations of spirit-manifestations, and in these I most heartily concur.

"I am not, perhaps, quite so severe as you are in regard to paid mediumship, for I see nothing wrong in the action of mediums who, in an upright and becoming way, accept remuneration for the time devoted by them to experimentations which are often long and fatiguing; but I am quite as much so – and it is impossible to be too much so – in regard to those who sometimes resort to fraud and trickery, to make up for the absence or insufficiency of results that have been promised beforehand on one side, and that are expected on the other (See 311).

"To mingle falsehood with truth, when the obtaining of phenomena by the intervention of spirits is in question, is simply infamous; and all moral sense must be obliterated in the medium who could venture on such a proceeding. As you truly say, frauds of this character, which are sure to be discovered sooner or later, *bring discredit on the cause itself in the mind of those who are undecided*. I add that it compromises most cruelly the honorable men who have afforded to such mediums the disinterested support of their knowledge and countenance, who have vouched for their honesty, and who have given them, so to say, their patronage. Such conduct, on the part of mediums, is treason to the friends who have trusted and helped them.

"All mediums who are convicted of fraudulent manoeuvres, all who have been caught tricking, should be placed under the ban of all the *spiritists* and *spiritualists* of the world, who should consider it as their bounden duty to unmask and to expose them.

"If you think proper to insert these lines in your periodical, they are at your service.

– Yours, etc…."

317. Spirit phenomena are not all imitated with equal skill; and there are some that absolutely defy the efforts of the most skilful conjuror. Among these are the movement of objects without contact, the suspension of heavy bodies in space, rapping noises heard in various places at the request of sitters, providing the phenomena is produced under conditions which exclude the possibility of trickery and collusion; and taking into consideration the character and position of the parties concerned and the interest they may have in deceiving; and always remembering that deceit is not likely to exist where nothing is to be gained by it.

A few words will suffice to put inquirers on their guard against the tricks sometimes resorted to for simulating spirit-phenomena.

318. The tilting of tables is sometimes imitated by pressure of the hands and feet, and the rapping sounds can be made in the same way, by movements of the hands, or of boot heels, etc.

Genuine spirit-raps, however, are easily distinguished from sham ones by their changes of' quality and place, at the demand of the sitters, by being repeated in various pieces of furniture in different parts of the room, in the floor, the walls, the ceiling, the air, etc., and by their replying to questions on subjects not known to the medium, which cannot be done by any method of simulation (See 41).

319. Direct writing is still easier to imitate than are the raps; not to speak of sympathetic inks. Mediums have sometimes been caught in the act of writing with a particle of black lead, or slate pencil, hidden under one of their nails.

320. The phenomenon of the transport of objects is also one that is open to trickery, and that may be imitated with the aid of clever management, even by those who do not possess the skill of the professional conjuror. We have given above (96)the statements of spirits, showing the exceptional conditions under which, alone, this class of phenomena can be produced; and we may therefore safely conclude that the claim of a medium to obtain phenomena of this order at pleasure must always be regarded with suspicion.

321. In the chapter on *Special Mediums*, we indicated, according to spirit-direction, the psychic aptitudes that are *common*, and those that are *rare*. Mediums who profess to obtain rare phenomena too easily, or to cumulate too many varieties of mediumship, lay themselves thereby open to suspicion.

322. Intelligent manifestations are usually the most reliable; nevertheless, even these are not always safe from imitation. As previously remarked, it is sometimes thought that there is more security with mechanical mediums, not only as regards independence of ideas, but also as regards trickery; for which reason some people prefer to employ the material appliances described above. But such people are mistaken; fraud slips in everywhere, and nothing is easier, for instance, than to direct a planchette at pleasure, giving to it the appearance of spontaneous movement. What alone removes all doubt is *the expression of thought*; whether through a mechanical, intuitive, clairaudient, trance, or clairvoyant medium. Some communications are so far beyond the knowledge, or the intellectual grasp, of the medium, that it would be impossible to attribute them to him. We admit that charlatanism is very skilful, and that it possesses a great variety of resources; but we do not admit that it can give knowledge to the ignorant, intellect to the stupid, or familiarity with names, dates, places, and circumstances, unknown to the medium.

To sum up, we repeat that the best guarantee of the genuineness of any manifestation is furnished by the character and position of the medium, and by the absence of all motives of worldly interest or vanity in the exercise of his ability; because the same stimulus of unworthy motives, which would prompt a medium to make an interested use of an ability really possessed by him, might also prompt him to simulate that ability if he did not really possess it.

CHAPTER 29

Spiritist Meetings and Societies

Of Meetings in general – Of Societies properly so-called – Subjects for study – Rivalry among Societies.

Of Meetings in general

323. SPIRITIST meetings may be very useful, by affording opportunities for mutual enlightenment through a reciprocal exchange of ideas, and through the questions and remarks made by each, and from which all may profit; but, for such meetings to be profitable, they must take place under certain special conditions, in regard to which we will now add a few remarks; premising, however, that such meetings are only an enlargement of the private sittings of those who are interested in the subject of Spiritism, and that their members will therefore naturally pursue the same ends, and take the same precautions to preserve themselves from the same dangers, as those we have already pointed out for the guidance of individuals.

Spiritist meetings are of three different characters, according to the aim they have in view; and may be designated, in consequence, as *frivolous*, *experimental* or *instructive*.

324. Frivolous meetings are composed of people who regard these manifestations only as an amusement, and who divert themselves with the facetious remarks of light-minded spirits, always delighted to take part in assemblies of this kind, which give them an opportunity for disporting themselves and which they take care not to miss. In such gatherings, all sorts of foolish questions are asked and answered; people get their fortunes told, or try to test the spirits' acumen by setting them to tell the ages of those who are present, what they have in their purses or pockets, what they are thinking of and various other things of equal interest and importance.

Such meetings lead to no serious results; but, as frivolous spirits are sometimes intelligent, and are generally good-tempered and jovial, they sometimes give rise to very curious incidents, which may be profitable to the attentive observer; but he who has seen nothing else, and who should judge of the world of spirits by such a sample, would have as false a notion of it as though he should judge of the population of a great city by what he found going on in some of its lowest quarters. Common sense suffices to assure us that elevated spirits would not be likely to attend meetings of this character, and that the invisibles, in such cases, are not likely to be more serious than the human beings who attract them. If people only wish to occupy themselves with futilities, let them frankly call up trivial spirits, as people call for Merry-Andrews, to amuse them, at a fair; but, in such a case, there would be both folly and profanation in attempting to evoke spirits of higher advancement, who would certainly pay no heed to such an evocation.

325. *Experimental meetings* have for their special object the production of physical manifestations. For many people, these constitute a spectacle more

Curious than instructive; the skeptics, when they have seen nothing else, often going away from them more astonished than convinced, and only intent on discovering the tricks by which they suppose them to have been produced; for, being unable to account for them in any other way, they jump to the conclusion that they are a result of trickery. It is altogether different with people who have previously studied the subject; for they have become convinced, beforehand, that many things hitherto regarded as impossible may and do occur, and they are therefore prepared to accept the facts which may present themselves, and which serve to confirm and complete their conviction; on the other hand, if trickery is resorted to, the knowledge they have previously acquired enables them to detect it.

Meetings for experimentation, notwithstanding their frequent uselessness to people unprepared for them, are, nevertheless, of undoubted importance. It is through the phenomena thus elicited that we have been enabled to discover the laws which govern the invisible world; and there are, undoubtedly, very many inquirers for whom they constitute a powerful means of conviction. What we mean to say is, that the sight of the phenomena, *alone*, is not sufficient to initiate us into the theoretic knowledge of spiritism, any more than the sight of an ingenious piece of mechanism can suffice to teach mechanics to those who know nothing of mechanical laws, although the value of the results arrived at, by experimentation of this character, will always be proportioned to the regularity and acumen with which they are conducted.

We shall recur to this subject a little further on.

326. Meetings for obtaining instruction from spirit-communications are quite different in character from the two other kinds of meetings just examined; and, since it is mainly from these that doctrinal information may be obtained, we think it incumbent upon us to be still more explicit in pointing out the conditions under which they should be held.

The first of these conditions is a grave and concentrated state of mind. We must remember that, if we would obtain teachings of high import, we must address ourselves to spirits of high degree, who alone are capable of imparting them. And we must also remember that the mere demand for the presence of such spirits does not suffice to attract them; that such spirits will certainly not come into an assembly of the frivolous and superficial, any more than they would do if they were still living upon the earth; and that, if we desire to enter into communication with them, we must place ourselves in the conditions which are most likely to attract them. A society which seeks to obtain communications from advanced spirits must devote itself exclusively to that aim; if it were wished to obtain extraordinary phenomena, the spirits who produce such phenomena would come for that purpose, but the higher ones would retire. In a word, whatever the character of a meeting, there will always be spirits ready to second it. A meeting for the elucidation of moral questions would consequently depart from its program, if it allowed its attention to be diverted to other aims.

Physical manifestations, as we have said, have their own special utility, and should be sought for, in experimentation meetings, by those who wish to witness them; and those who seek to obtain clearer views of truth and of duty should seek them in meetings in which the moral and intellectual aspects of spiritism form the subject of research. In this way, all may complete their education in the intellectual and practical branches of spiritism, as, in the schools of art and of science, some of the students follow the theoretic lectures, and others the practical classes.

327. Theoretic spiritism includes both the search after truth and the study of the phenomena, with the aid of the spirits who come to elucidate these two aspects of the matter; it is thus that the knowledge of the nature and causes of the phenomena are arrived at; and it is, therefore, only through observation, methodically and perseveringly carried on, in meetings of the two distinct characters now under consideration, that our knowledge of the spirit-world can be advanced. And it would be a mistake to suppose that the more extraordinary phenomena are the only ones to be studied; for the phenomena of intelligent communication furnish us, at every step, with valuable indications that should not be overlooked by serious investigators; indications which it would be impossible to point out beforehand, but which naturally arise in the course of the meetings, and which, though less striking than the physical phenomena, are yet of the deepest interest to the observer, who finds in them the confirmation of principles already accepted, or the revelation of new principles, enabling him to penetrate still further into the mysteries of the invisible world.

328. Meetings for the study of spiritist questions with the aid of spirits are, moreover, very useful for the development of mediums who desire to obtain intelligent manifestations, and to fit themselves for becoming the instruments of superior spirits.

One of the principal stumbling blocks of mediumship, as we have shown, is the obsession of spirits who fascinate their medium, and puff him up with *a* belief in his own infallibility; and the frequentation of those who are united in the pursuit of truth, and who bring their united judgement to the examination of the messages received from spirits, is, for writing-mediums, the best preservative from this very serious danger.

Every medium who would not become a cat’s-paw for the dissemination of error should make a point of attending meetings of the serious character we are considering, and should avail himself of the friendly criticism of those about him, for the appraising of the communications he receives. He will thus get rid of deceptive spirits by showing them that he is open to conviction, and does not intend to allow himself to be imposed upon. No medium can reasonably be pained or offended by such criticism, because what he obtains is not from himself, and he is therefore no more responsible for it than he would be for the defects of an earthly writer for whom he should have acted as an amanuensis.

We have insisted on this point, because, if fascination be a trial for the mediums themselves, it is also such for the assemblies they attend (to which the cooperation of an obsessed or fascinated medium must always be more injurious than profitable), and to the spiritist public, from the false and erroneous ideas which ignorant, presumptuous, or lying spirits, are thus enabled to disseminate.

329. The prime object of meetings for spiritist study should be to keep off deceptive spirits; it would be an error to suppose that the object of such meetings, or the excellence of their mediums, will suffice to ensure this end, which can only be attained by favorable conditions on the part of the Society itself.

In order fully to comprehend what occurs in such a meeting, we beg our readers to refer to No. 231, concerning the *influence of surroundings on spirit-manifestations*.

Every human being is incessantly surrounded by a number of invisible sympathizers attracted to him by his temper, tastes, and tendencies; so that every person who enters a meeting brings with him a group of spirits in sympathy with himself. According to their number and their nature, these spirits exercise a good or bad influence on the assembly and on the communications received. A perfect meeting would be one in which all the members, animated with the same love of truth and goodness, should bring with them none but good and enlightened spirits; the next best would be one in which goodness and the desire for light should preponderate over vanity and evil; an assertion too self-evident to need further comment.

330. A meeting is a *collective being* whose qualities and properties are the result of the totality of those of its members, and that may be compared to a bundle of rods or a faggot, the strength of which is in proportion to its homogeneity. If our readers have weighed what has been stated (282, *quest*. 5) respecting the manner in which spirits in space are made aware of our evocation, the powerful attraction exercised by the consentaneous thought of an entire assembly will be readily understood. If a spirit be *struck*, so to say, by a *thought* as we are by a voice, the united thoughts of many people must necessarily *strike* him with greater force than the isolated thought of a single individual; but, for all these thoughts to concur to the same end, they must vibrate in unison, their action blending into one; and this cannot occur without serious concentration of thought and purpose on the part of all who are present.

On the other hand, a spirit, finding himself in the midst of sympathetic surroundings, is more at his ease; evoked by friends, he comes more willingly, and is both more disposed and better able to reply.

Whoever has attentively observed the course of spirit-communications will have seen that, when the thoughts of the assembly are divergent, they produce a jarring of ideas which is disagreeable to the spirit, and is consequently prejudicial to his communication. It is the same as with a man who is about to make a speech; if he feels that the thoughts of his hearers

are sympathetic and kindly, the impression he receives from them reacts upon his own mind and gives more life and energy to his ideas; for this concurrence of sentiment exercises over him a sort of magnetic action which increases his power a hundredfold, while he is confused and paralyzed by indifference or hostility. In the same way, actors are electrified by applause; and spirits, being far more impressionable than men, are still more powerfully affected by the influences around them.

Every meeting for spiritist purposes should therefore cultivate unity of sentiment, as the means of obtaining the cooperation of wise and good spirits; but if its aim is simply to obtain communications of any sort, no matter what, and without reference to the qualities of the spirits who give them, it is evident that such a precaution is unnecessary; but, in that case, people must not complain of the quality of the results obtained by them.

331. Earnestness of purpose and harmony of feeling being essential conditions of every serious meeting, the presence of too many people may be prejudicial to the attainment of the desired homogeneity of influence. No absolute rule, however, can be laid down as regards numbers; and it is evident that a meeting of a hundred people, if earnest and sympathetic, may offer more favorable conditions than one of ten, if disunited and frivolous; but experience has shown us that, in general, the greater the number of people assembled, the more difficult it is to obtain the requisite conditions, and that small, intimate circles are usually those which offer the most favorable conditions for spirit-action.

332. Another point of no less importance to the success of spiritist meetings is regularity. When meetings are held on stated days and at fixed hours, the spirits with whom we are in communication make their arrangements in consequence, and rarely fail to be present. There are spirits, not, however, the highest class, who are punctual even to excess, take offence at being kept waiting, and, if they have themselves appointed the time of converse, would be expected in vain if evoked a single instant too soon, or too late. Spirits *can* come, undoubtedly, at other hours than those appointed, and they do so, voluntarily, if the object to be attained is important; but nothing is more unfavorable to the obtaining of fine communications or successful manifestations, than the calling of spirits at random, just when the fancy takes us, and without any serious motive. The spirits whom we evoke at random may decline to come; and, in such cases, inferior spirits are tolerably sure to take their places and to borrow their names.

Spiritist Societies.

333. All that we have said concerning spiritist meetings is equally applicable to regularly constituted societies; and as we have frequently been asked for advice respecting the mode of organization which may be usefully adopted by such bodies, we proceed to state briefly our opinion in regard to this point.

Spiritism, being in its infancy, is still too diversely regarded, and its essentials are still too little understood, by many of its adherents, to constitute any very strong bond of union among people associated in a society of this kind. Such a bond can only exist between those who see its moral bearing, and who endeavor to make a practical application of its principles. Between those who see in it only an order of facts more or less curious, no strong bond of union can exist; its members being more interested in facts than in principles, a mere difference of opinion in regard to the phenomena would suffice to create disunion between them. On the other hand, a society that should be united in principle, and in which mutual trust and kindness should exist to the exclusion of their opposites, whose members should assemble with the sole aim of obtaining truth through the communications of superior spirits, would not only be likely to live, but would be indissoluble. But the difficulty of bringing together elements really homogeneous, has led us to the conviction that spiritists should aim at multiplying small groups, rather than at forming themselves into large agglomerations. These groups, corresponding together, visiting each other, and transmitting to one another the results arrived at by each, may, even now, form the nucleus of the great spiritist family which will one day rally to itself all opinions, and unite all men in the common brotherhood of Christian charity.

334. We have seen how important is unity of sentiment as a condition of obtaining useful results; and it is evident that this unity must be more difficult to arrive at in proportion to the number of people admitted to membership. In small groups, the members are better known to each other, and are confident of the new ones who are added to them from time to time; concentration of thought is more easily secured, and the meetings resemble the intimate gatherings of a single family. Large assemblies, on the contrary, exclude the possibility of intimacy through the variety of their component elements; they necessitate special places of meeting, larger pecuniary resources and an administrative machinery not needed in small groups; the divergence of characters, ideas, and opinions, is more defined in large assemblies, and this divergence offers, to quarrelsome spirits, more facilities for sowing discord. The larger the meeting, the more difficult is it to satisfy everybody; each would like to have everything managed according to his own views and wishes, and this opposition of sentiment and of effort engenders unpleasantness and disunion that may end in dissolution. Small groups are not liable to the same fluctuations, and, besides, while the fall of a large society would present the appearance of a check to the spiritist cause which its enemies would not fail to make the most of; the dissolution of a small group nor only passes unnoticed, but is sure to be speedily followed by the formation of a score of new ones. On the other hand, it is certain that twenty groups, of from fifteen to twenty people each, will do more for the cause of propagation than could be done by a single gathering of three or four hundred people.

It will doubtless be said that the members of a society, who should fall out in the way we have been considering, could not be true spiritists, because the very first duty imposed by our doctrine is the practice of charity and benevolence. That is perfectly true, and such people would be spiritists only in name (28); but, as there are many such, we maintain our advice.

335. Let us not forget, too, that spiritism has its enemies, the most dangerous of whom are not those who attack it openly, but those who pretend to be its friends in order to injure it underhandedly; that such people find it far more easy to pursue their aim of sowing discord in large assemblies than in little groups of which all the members are known to each other; and that ruptures and unfriendliness, deplorable as they are in any society, are doubly so in Spiritist Societies, because they are the negation of the very aim of their formation, and destroy the very first condition of their success.

336. “But if a society is getting upon a wrong track; “it may be asked, “have not sensible and well-meaning members the right to criticize what they regard as a departure from its true path of action, instead of maintaining a silence that might seem to imply approbation?” Undoubtedly they have this right, and it is their duty to exercise it; but criticism, dictated by true and friendly motives, should always be made in considerate and kindly terms, and, when it is not received in the same spirit, those who have proffered it should leave the society altogether; for upright and worthy men could not remain in a society the tendencies of which they disapproved.

337. Besides the notoriously ill disposed, there are others who, through their character and temper, bring trouble with them wherever they go: too much care, therefore, cannot be exercised in regard to the introduction of new elements into a society. The most objectionable are not those who are ignorant of the subject, nor even the incredulous; conviction can Only be arrived at through experience, and there are many who, knowing nothing and even doubting, are yet honestly desirous of getting at the truth. Those whom it is most important to guard against are the theorists; those who have erected negation into a system; habitual doubters who are inaccessible to the dearest evidence; and those who believe that they alone are capable of seeing the light, look disdainfully on all who differ with them, and are bent on making everyone conform to their opinion. We must not allow ourselves to be taken in by the pretended desire of such people for enlightenment; for not a few of them would rather remain in error than admit that they had been mistaken. It is also wise to have as little as possible to do with tiresome talkers, who delight in contradicting and who must always have the last word; such people would only cause us to lose our time without benefit to themselves, for advanced spirits have no sympathy with idle words.

338. In view of the necessity of avoiding everything that could give rise to confusion and trouble, Spiritist Societies should adopt proper measures for ensuring order and harmony, and for ridding themselves of the fomentors of

disorder. Small private groups need only a few simple rules for determining the order of their meetings; regularly constituted societies require a more complete organization, though, even in their case, the simpler the arrangements adopted, the greater will be the probability of success.

339. Spiritist Societies, whether large or small, have to guard, in all their meetings, against another danger. Fomentors of discord are to be found, not only among their members, but also among the denizens of the invisible world. Just as there are Protecting Spirits for societies, towns and peoples, so there are maleficent spirits who attach themselves to groups of people as they do to individuals, and whose insidious action, if not promptly resisted, will spread obsession among their members like a contagious disease, showing itself in the mediums by the disturbance of their mediumship, and, among the rest of their members, by a sentiment of hostility, a perversion of the moral sense, and the destruction of harmony. Under these circumstances we must make a strong appeal to good spirits for aid in bringing back all the members of the group to a sentiment of charity, and in opening the eyes of the victims of evil spirits to the real nature of the influence under which they have fallen.

The first of these attracts the help of spirits of high degree; the second discourages evil spirits by showing them that their machinations are discovered and resisted.

340. The influence of surroundings and conditions, as we have already shown, is a consequence of the nature of spirits and of their mode of action on men. The conditions necessary for attracting good spirits and for keeping off evil ones may be summed up as follows:

Perfect community of views and sentiments;

Reciprocity of kindly feeling among the members;

Abnegation of every sentiment contrary to Christian charity;

A general desire for truth;

Exclusion from the sittings of everything like frivolity;

Concentration of thought and desire in the pursuit of the common end, and in the evocation of the spirits whose presence is desired; cooperation of the mediums, with the disinterested desire to be useful, without vanity, ambition, or any other selfish motive.

Are these conditions unattainable? We think not; we believe, on the contrary, that centers combining these conditions already exist in many places, and that they will be greatly multiplied in course of time; and we do not hesitate to assert, on the one hand, that their multiplication will constitute a powerful means of propagating a belief in the reality of spirit-manifestations, and, on the other hand, that the bond thus established among their members will tend to generalize the sentiment of human solidarity, and will thus contribute to the advancement of the cause of progress in general.

341. It would be an error to suppose that meetings for obtaining physical manifestations are exempted from the need of fraternal harmony, for we

have proof to the contrary in the fact that manifestations of this nature, even when sought for with the aid of a powerful medium, cannot be obtained amidst unfriendly and inharmonious surroundings, because any divergence or hostility of feeling among those present necessarily paralyses the action of the spirits and impedes their manifestations.

Physical manifestations, as we have already said, are of vast utility; they open out an immense field to the observer, for they constitute an order of phenomena altogether apart from our ordinary experience, and of which the consequences are incalculable. Spiritist Societies, as well as private groups, may therefore occupy themselves seriously and usefully with these phenomena; but they cannot attain their end, whether of study or of experimentation, unless under favorable conditions on the part of those present. The first of these conditions is, not *faith*, but *the sincere desire to ascertain the truth*; the second is *restriction as regards numbers*, so as to avoid bringing together heterogeneous elements. Although physical manifestations are generally produced by spirits of comparatively slight advancement, they none the less occur for a Providential purpose, and their production is superintended and favored by spirits of high degree, whenever a useful result is to be attained thereby; harmony of feeling and concentration of thought are therefore important aids to that production.

Subjects of study.

342. When we have evoked the spirits of our relations and friends, or those of celebrated personages with a view to ascertaining their opinions on questions of general interest, we are often at a loss as to what to say to them, and are sometimes in danger of falling into commonplaces and futilities. Many people suppose, moreover, that *The Spirits' Book* has exhausted the series of moral and philosophical questions that may be profitably addressed to the people of the other world; but this is an error, as we are about to show.

343. If the evocation of illustrious spirits is eminently useful through the instructive statements they make to us, that of ordinary spirits is not less so, because, although the latter are incapable of answering questions of high import, their very inferiority is instructive, through the light it throws on the subject of our intellectual and moral progress, and on the conditions of existence beyond the grave, as we explained above (281).

An inexhaustible mine of observation is therefore furnished by the statements of all those whose earthly life has presented some peculiarity, however trifling, whether in the manner of their death, their age, their good or bad qualities, their social position, their habits, mental state, etc., as compared with their state in the spirit world. With elevated spirits, the area of investigation is still farther enlarged besides the psychological questions we may address to them, but which have their limit in the present state of our abilities and scientific knowledge, we may propose to them an infinity of moral problems concerning the various positions and uses of the earthly

life, the best method of acting under certain circumstances, our reciprocal duties, etc. The value of the answers we receive on any subject, whether moral, historical, philosophical, or scientific, depends, it is hardly necessary to Bay, on the degree of elevation of the spirit interrogated; it is for us to judge of this value with the aid of examination and of reason.

344. Besides evocations, the spontaneous statements often made by spirits afford an endless variety of subjects for study. Thus, in spiritist meetings, we may either make a direct appeal to some spirit previously determined on, or we may await the manifestations of spirits who may present themselves spontaneously, as they sometimes do most unexpectedly, and whose statements may give rise to a multitude of interesting questions.

345. The occupations of meeting for study may be divided under the following heads:

(1) Reading of spirit-communications obtained at the previous meeting.

(2) Reading of *reports*, correspondence, and communications obtained elsewhere. Relation of facts bearing on spiritism.

(3) Consideration of given subjects *in conjunction with spirits*. Spontaneous dictations by spirits, through the mediums present. Questions on various moral subjects addressed to the spirits who take part in the meeting. Evocations.

(4) Analytical and critical examination of the communications obtained. Discussion of points of spiritist doctrine.

346. Spiritist groups, in their early stages, are sometimes impeded by the want of mediums; and even those which possess several mediums may accidentally find themselves without any. Scientific societies have not always their instruments of experimentation at hand, yet they are seldom at a loss to find subjects upon which to discourse; in the absence of poets and orators, literary societies comment upon the works of ancient and modern authors; religious societies meditate on the Scriptures, and so on, Spiritist Societies should follow these examples; and, in the absence of mediums, may read and comment upon everything connected with spiritism, both for and against it. From discussions of this sort, to which each member brings the tribute of his reflections, much light may be elicited, especially in the larger societies, including members of intelligence and experience, such as would rarely be found in private groups.

Besides distinctively spiritist subjects, the daily press presents a constant succession of facts, narratives, events, traits of virtue and of vice, which involve weighty questions of morality that can only be answered by the spiritist theory, connected as it is with every department of natural law and of social order.

Rivalry among Societies.

347. The societies which devote themselves to intelligent communications, and those which devote themselves to obtaining physical manifestations, are equally useful, equally indispensable to each other. Whichever should

regard the other disparagingly, would prove itself to be devoid of the true sentiment of spiritism, and would only injure the cause it professed to serve.
348. These remarks are equally applicable to differences of opinion, on the part of certain groups, in regard to points of doctrine. As is remarked in our chapter on *Contradictions*, these differences are often more apparent than real; it would be childish to allow such differences to produce separation and disunion, and still worse to allow them to become pretexts for opposition and rivalry.
349. If, as has been announced, spiritism is destined to effect the transformation of humanity, that result can only be effected by the amelioration of the masses; and this amelioration can only be accomplished gradually, through the amelioration of individuals. Of what use is it to believe in the existence of spirits, if our belief does not make us better, kinder, more indulgent towards our fellow creatures, more humble, more hopeful, more patient under adversity? Of what use is it for the miser to be a spiritist, if he remains miserly? What is the proud man the better for his spiritist belief, if he is proud and full of himself? Or the envious man, if his envy still remains with him? All men might believe in spirit-manifestations, and yet the human race remain stationary; but such, we are assured, is not God's design. It is towards the realization of the aim of Providence that Spiritist Societies should tend, by grouping together those who are imbued with the same sentiments; union, sympathy, and fraternity will then succeed to the vain and puerile antagonism of self-conceit, and good deeds will take the place of words. Let all Spiritist Societies adopt as their basis a principle that cannot be overthrown, *viz.*, *the good of all*; and they will compel respect, because their actions will be the practical carrying out of the morality of Christ.
This is the direction which we have constantly endeavored to give to the spiritist movement. On our banner is inscribed *Christian and Humanitarian Spiritism*; and we rejoice to see so many already rallying round it from every part of the globe, because they comprehend that this motto is the anchor of individual safety, the safeguard of public order, the signal of a new era for the human race. We invite all
Spiritist Societies to concur in this great work; by holding out helping hands to one another all the world over, they will constitute – with the aid of the good spirits whom they will attract to them – a barrier which evil spirits will be unable to pass; and they will thus usher in the reign of goodness and happiness predicted by Christ in His sublime prayer that the "will" of God might "be done on earth as it is in heaven."

CHAPTER 30

Parisian Society for Psychologic Studies

THIS chapter, containing only the Constitution and Bylaws of *The Parisian Society for Psychologic Studies*, has been omitted by the Translator as unimportant at the present day, that Society – founded by Allan Kardec in 1858, and of which he was President until his demise – having been, in accordance with the plans of its founder, superseded by *The Joint Stock Company for the Continuation of the Works of Allan Kardec*, the last line of the draft of the Constitution of which he finished writing about an hour before he died; but as that Society has taken a leading part in the propagation of the spiritist philosophy, and has served as a model for the innumerable societies that have been established, for kindred purposes, in France and in other countries, the following brief account of the meetings of the Society to which it refers has been substituted in place of the original chapter.

By Article I. of its Constitution, *The Parisian Society for Psychologic Studies* was stated to have "for its object the study of spirit-phenomena, and their bearing on moral, physical, historical, and psychological science. Politics, religious controversy, and questions of social economy," were, by that Article, "interdicted."

The Society met, every Friday evening, at 8 p.m. at the residence of its President, which, during the latter part of his life, was in the Rue St Anne. The meetings were strictly private, but admission to them, by letters of invitation, was easily obtained. The proceedings always began with a short prayer, asking of the Almighty that good spirits might be sent to take part in them, evil ones kept away, light given for distinguishing truth from falsehood, the mediums impressed with a sense of the sacredness of their mission, the incredulous and hostile helped to a better mind, and the Spirit-President of the Society (Saint Louis) enabled to watch over and assist the meeting. Then followed the reading of the minutes of the preceding meeting; the Reports and Correspondence addressed to the Parisian Society by similar societies in France and elsewhere; the reading and discussion of Psychic communications obtained at the preceding meeting or sent to the Society by other societies or by individuals; the consideration of some question of moral or scientific interest, or the evocation of some particular spirit as previously agreed upon; after which, all the mediums present seated themselves around a long table, and wrote under the influence of the spirits with whom they were in sympathy. The communications thus transmitted were usually in prose, occasionally in verse, and often very fine; they sometimes offered interesting peculiarities, such as names, dates, or statements of facts, etc., unknown to the medium, but subsequently ascertained to have been correct; sometimes, again, a trance-medium would be controlled by a spirit, giving rise to episodes of vivid, or even tragic,

interest; a communication of exceptional acumen or beauty, or perhaps a short but pithy comment, from Saint Louis, being frequently given, at the close of a discussion in reference to the point which had been under consideration. When all the mediums had ceased writing, each of them read aloud, in turn, the communication which he, or she, had been made to write; and the proceedings terminated, about half past ten, with a short form of thanks for the presence of the spirits who had taken part in them, and of prayer for any perverse or unhappy spirits who might have been brought to the meeting by their spirit-guides.

The communications obtained on these occasions, as well as those sent to the Society from a distance, were, by universal consent, regarded as being the property of the Society, were copied into “Registers” kept for that purpose, and deposited among its “Archives,” and furnished the materials from which Allan Kardec successively compiled *The Mediums’ Book*, *Heaven and Hell*, *The Gospel Explained by Spirits*, and *Genesis*. – A.B.

CHAPTER 31

Dissertations by Spirits

On Spiritism – Mediums – Meetings – Apocryphal Communications.

WE have brought together, in this chapter, various communications spontaneously made, by various spirits, through the involuntary writing of different mediums, completing and confirming the principles laid down in the present work. We might quote a much greater number of such communications, but we confine ourselves to those which refer more particularly to the future of spiritism, to mediums, and to Spiritist Societies. We give them, both for the sake of the instruction they convey, and as specimens of the kind of communications which may justly be called "serious." We conclude with a few apocryphal communications, followed by remarks intended to assist the reader in recognizing them as such.

On Spiritism

(1) "Have confidence in the goodness of God, and endeavor to open your eyes to the comprehension of the influences that are ushering in a new life for the inhabitants of your globe. You will not enjoy this new life in your present incarnation; but will you not rejoice, even though you should not have to live again upon the earth, to contemplate, from some higher sphere, the development of the work begun by you in your present existence? Let a firm and unwavering faith nerve your arms against the obstacles which threaten to impede the building of the edifice of which you are laying the foundations. That edifice will be indestructible; for Christ has laid its cornerstone.

Courage, builders who are working out the plan of the Divine Architect! Work on;

God will crown your labor. But remember that Christ denies the pretended disciples whose charity is only of the lips. It is not enough *to believe*; you must set an example of kindness, helpfulness, disinterestedness, or your faith will prove sterile, and you, yourselves, will reap from it no advantage."

SAINT AUGUSTINE.

(2) "It is Christ Himself who is directing the labors of every kind that are being accomplished for bringing in the approaching era of renovation and elevation which your spirit-guides predict for your earth. If you look beyond these spirit-manifestations to the events that are occurring around you, you cannot fail to perceive, in the progress of all kinds now being made in your earth, the precursory signs which should convince you that the time predicted for that renovation has arrived.

"Communications are being opened, by land and sea, between all countries and peoples; and, when the physical barriers between them shall have been overthrown, the moral barriers of political and religious prejudices which kept them apart will also disappear, and the reign of fraternity will be firmly

and durably established. The sovereigns themselves, impelled by an invisible hand, are seen, at the present day – a thing hitherto unheard of in your world – taking the lead in the inauguration of reforms; and reforms that are thus spontaneously begun from above will be at once more rapidly accomplished, and more durable, than those which are begun from below and by violence. Despite the prejudices of my childhood and education, despite my reverent affection for the past, I had a presentiment of the present epoch; I rejoice in it, and I rejoice still more to be able to come to you and to say: Courage, brothers! Work for your own future, and for that of those you love; work, above all, for your own personal improvement, and you will enjoy, in your next existence, a happiness which it would be as difficult for me to describe as for you to understand."

"CHATEAUBRIAND."

(3) "It appears to me that spiritism may be regarded as *a philosophical study of the secret springs and inner movements of the soul, that have hitherto bee so little understood*. It *explains* even more than it *reveals*. Its assertion of reincarnation, and of the necessity of the trials through which we attain the supreme aim, is not a *revelation*, but an important *confirmation* of doctrines always, though vaguely, held in the past. I am particularly struck by the utility of spiritism as *a means of bringing new light to bear on old truths*; and I use the word '*means'* designedly, because, in my opinion, spiritism is a lever which overthrows the barriers of mental blindness. Interest in the study of moral questions is still to be created. People discuss political questions which deal with general interests; they discuss private interests, and attack or defend personalities with passion; scientific theories have their partisans and their detractors; but the *moral truths* which are the soul's nutriment, its bread of life, are left in the dust of ages. Every amelioration is considered useful by the generality of mankind, excepting the amelioration of the soul; its education, its elevation, are regarded as chimeras, fit, at best, to occupy the leisure of priests, poets, and women, as a matter of fashion, or as a branch of merely dogmatic teaching.

"If *spiritism* should resuscitate *spiritualism*, it will have rendered an immense service to society, by awakening the aspiration which gives, to some, internal dignity, to others, resignation, to all, the desire to raise themselves towards the Supreme Being, lost sight of and forgotten by His ungrateful creatures."

"J. J. ROUSSEAU."

(4) "If God now permits the open communication of spirits with men, it is in order to enlighten men in regard to their duties, and to show them the road which will shorten their trials by hastening their advancement; for, as fruit arrives at maturity, so must man at length arrive at perfection. But, besides the spirits of high advancement who desire your welfare, there are imperfect spirits who try to do you harm; while the first urge you forwards, the others would fain pull you back. You must therefore give your utmost

attention to the work of distinguishing between them, and this you will easily do if you bear in mind that nothing hurtful can proceed from a good spirit, and that whatever is evil can only proceed from an evil one. If you turn away from the wise counsels of the spirits who desire your good, if you take offence at the home truths they sometimes tell you, it is evident that you have evil spirits for your counsellors. Pride alone prevents men from seeing themselves as they are; but, if they do not see this for themselves, others see it for them, and they are contemned, both by their fellow men, who laugh at them behind their back, and by the spirits who have helped to lead them astray."

A Familiar Spirit

(5) "Your doctrine is beautiful and excellent; its first landmarks are firmly set. You have but to go forward in the broad and noble road now opened before you. Blessed is he who shall reach the goal; and the more numerous the proselytes he shall have made on the way, the greater will be his reward. But, in order to do this, you must give to your doctrine something more than the cold assent of the intellect; you must practice it with the ardor of a hearty conviction, and this ardor will double your strength, for God is always with those who seek to bring others into the right road. Be sure that there is, in the heart of the most skeptical, the biggest atheist, a little corner that he would fain hide, if possible, even from himself. That little corner is his vulnerable point; attack him there: it is a narrow breach kept purposely open by God, in order that a ray of His love may gain admission, sooner or later, into the heart that has been so long closed against Him."

SAINT BENEDICT.

(6) "Be not alarmed by obstacles or controversies. Torment no one by persisting in the effort to enlighten him against his will; the skeptic will be persuaded by your disinterestedness, patience, and charity, more effectually than by any argument. You should especially avoid doing violence to opinion, either by your words or by any public demonstration. The greater your modesty, the sooner will you as spiritists be justly appreciated. Let no selfish motive influence your action, and seek only to possess the attractive force that comes from kindness. Spirits, by God's command, are working for the progress of all without exception; you, spiritists, must do likewise I"

"SAINT LOUIS."

(7) "What institution, human or divine, has not had obstacles to surmount, and schisms to strive against? If you had only a weak and moribund existence, your enemies would not take the trouble to attack you, for they would know that you must succumb sooner or later; but as your vitality is strong and active, as the spiritist tree is strongly rooted, and likely to live and flourish, they bring their hatchets to bear against it. What will they gain by their hatred and violence? They will, at most, succeed in lopping off a

few branches, which will shoot out again, full of fresh sap, and stronger than ever."

"CHANNING."

(8) "Let me speak to you of the resolution and perseverance with which you should follow up your spiritist labors; for, just as Saint Paul was persecuted, so will you be also not physically, but morally. The unbelievers and the Pharisees of the day will blame and revile you; but fear nothing, for opposition is a trial which strengthens when patiently borne from devotion to the Highest. Your efforts will at length be crowned with success, and will have won for you great triumph in the life to come, besides the happiness you will feel in remembering that you have aided in opening up a fount of consolation for all who, upon the earth, have lost friends and relatives, and who may thus communicate with them, and know that they are happy. Go boldly forwards; accomplish the mission appointed for you, and great will be your reward when you appear before the Almighty."

CHANNING.

On Mediums

(9) "All men are mediums; all have a spirit-guide who, if they listen to him, directs them in the right way. It matters little that some men communicate directly with their spirit-guide by means of their own mediumship, while others only receive the counsels of their guide through his occult action on their heart or on their mind; in either case, it is their familiar spirit who gives them counsel. Call it as you will – your familiar spirit, inspiration, reason, intelligence – it is always a voice that answers the inner voice of your soul, and addresses to you wise counsel, though you do not always profit thereby.

All men are not yet able to follow the suggestions of reason; I refer, not to the reason that grovels and crawls in its devotion to worldly things, and that loses itself in the care of gross material interests, but to the reason which raises a man above himself; the reason which transports him to unknown regions, the sacred flame which inspires the artist and the poet, the divine thought which elevates the mind of the philosopher, the vital impulsion which carries forward not only individuals but peoples, the reason which the vulgar cannot comprehend, but which lifts man ever nearer and nearer to God, the reason which leads him on from the known to the unknown, and enables him to achieve sublime results. Listen to the monitions which come to you incessantly, and your perceptions will gradually be opened to the voice of your guardian angel, who holds out to you a helping hand from the celestial heights. The inner voice which speaks to the heart of every man is the voice of the good spirits around him; and, from this point of view, it may be truly said that *all men are mediums*."

CHANNING.

(10) "Psychic ability is as old as the world. The prophets were mediums; the mysteries of Eleusis were founded on mediumship; the Chaldeans,

Assyrians, Egyptians, and all the peoples of antiquity, had their mediums Socrates was directed by a spirit whose voice he heard, and who inspired him with the admirable principles of his philosophy; the inspirations of Joan of Arc were the voices of the beneficent spirits who guided her. This ability, which is now becoming generalized, was comparatively rare in the Middle Ages; but it has never ceased to exist. Swedenborg has had many successors.

"The France of the last few centuries – irreverent, carried away by philosophical systems which, aiming at the destruction of the abuses of religious intolerance, stifled under ridicule all aspiration after the ideal – could not but repel spiritism, which, nevertheless, did not cease to maintain itself in the North. This struggle of Positivism against Spiritualism was permitted by Providence, because Spiritualism had become fanatical; but now that the progress of industry and science has developed the arts of life to such a point that material tendencies have become predominant, God wills that interest in the soul should be reawakened in the minds of the spirits incarnated upon the earth, and that *the perfecting of the moral being* should become, as it ought to be, *the recognized end and object of human life*. The human spirit follows a foreordained and necessary line of march, image of the gradations undergone by all the beings that people the visible and invisible universe.

Each new step of progress is accomplished at the appointed time; the epoch fixed for the moral elevation of the human race has now come; and, although this elevation will not be fully accomplished in your present lifetime, you may be thankful that you are permitted to witness the dawn of the glorious new day."

PIERRE JOUTY. (THE MEDIUM'S FATHER)

(11) "Sent by the Highest with a message to those who are favored with the gift of mediumship, I come to remind them that the greater the favors which have been granted them by His Providence, the greater is the danger they will incur by any misuse of their gift. The abilities possessed by mediums attract to them the admiration, adulation, and felicitations of men; therein lies their danger. Let all mediums remember their primitive incapacity, and let them never attribute to their own personal merit what they owe to God alone. When mediums lose sight of this truth, they are abandoned by good spirits, and, having no longer a guide to direct them, they become the sport of evil ones. Those who attribute to themselves a value which is not theirs, are punished by the withdrawal of their gift which could only be fatal to them.

"I cannot too strongly urge upon all mediums the *necessity* of maintaining a constant communication with their guardian angel, that he may be able to help them to keep clear of the pride which is their worst enemy. Bear constantly in mind, O you who have the happiness of being the interpreters between spirits and men, that, without the support of our Divine Master, you are in danger of laying up for yourselves punishment that will be severe

in proportion to the greatness of the psychic ability that has been confided to you. May this communication have the effect of inducing all mediums to avoid the rock of offence on which they are in danger of making shipwreck – *pride*."

JEANNE D' ARC."

(12) "If you would receive communications from superior spirits, you must prepare yourselves for this favor by concentration of thought, purity of intention, and sincere desire to help forward the cause of progress; for selfishness is a barrier between you and them. Remember that, if God permits you to receive the inspiration of those of His children who have earned the happiness of comprehending His infinite goodness, it is in order that you may advance, and aid others to advance, on the appointed path of progress. Therefore, O mediums! it is incumbent on you to make only a good use of the gift that has been given you. Confiding in, and emulating, our Master's kindness, let your charity, your tolerance for all about you, be inexhaustible. By scrupulously regulating your action according to your conscience, you will increase a hundredfold your own happiness in your quickly-fleeting earthly life, and you will have prepared for yourselves a thousandfold greater happiness in the life to come.

"Let every medium, who does not feel in himself the moral strength that will enable him to consecrate his gift to the noblest use, withdraw altogether from the work of mediumship; for he who, being favored with special light, allows himself to enter upon a wrong path, incurs the heavier retribution reserved for those who have gone wilfully astray."

PASCAL

(13) "Bear with me while I call your attention to the disinterestedness which, with modesty, should be the characteristic accompaniment of mediumship. God has given to mediums a gift which enables them to be the intermediary between spirits and men, in order that they may employ that gift in spreading the truth, but not that they make it a matter of traffic. And, in saying this, I refer, not merely to those who turn their mediumship to pecuniary account as they would any ordinary talent, and who set up as *mediums* just as others set up as *dancers* or *singers*, but to *all who use their psychic abilities for the furtherance of personal ends*. Is it reasonable to suppose that spirits of high degree, who condemn cupidity in the ratio of their elevation, would consent to be shown off as a spectacle, putting themselves, like so many play-actors, into the hands of a contractor for spirit-phenomena? And is it in any respect more reasonable to suppose that such spirits would favor the views of vanity and ambition? God permits spirits to communicate with men in order that they may help men to raise themselves out of the mire of materiality, but not that they may serve as the instruments of mundane passions and those mediums who pervert the gift bestowed upon them by God will be punished for such a desecration with a severity proportioned to the heinousness of their offence."

DELPHINE DE GIRARDIN.

(14) “All mediums are called to serve the cause of spiritism in the measure of their ability, but so few of them escape the wills of self-love that, out of a hundred mediums, hardly one is to be found, no matter how slight his psychic gift, who does not, especially in the early days of his mediumship, believe himself to be destined to the accomplishment of some great mission. Those who fall into the snare of this vainglorious belief – and they are many – become the prey of obsessing spirits, who subjugate them by flattering their pride; and, the greater has been their ambition, the more pitiable is their fall.

“Great missions are only confided to picked men, who are placed, not by any seeking of their own, but by the leadings of Providence, in the position in which their action will be most efficacious. Inexperienced mediums cannot be too distrustful of what may be said to them, by flattering spirits, as to the importance of the part they are called to play; for, if they take all this flattery seriously, they will reap disappointment, both in this world and in the next. Let mediums remember that they can do good service, even in the most obscure and modest sphere, by helping to convince the skeptic, or by giving consolation to the afflicted. If it be their mission to go beyond this narrower range of psychic activity, they will be guided onwards, into a wider sphere of activity, by an invisible hand that will open their way before them and bring them forward, so to say, in spite of themselves. Let all mediums bear in mind these words: “*He that exalt-eth himself shall be abased*; *and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*.”

“THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH”

On Spiritist Societies

Remark – Of the following communications, some were obtained at the meetings, or for the use, of the *Parisian Society for Psychologic Studies*; others have been transmitted to us, from various quarters, by different mediums. We give them in this place as containing general advice in regard to the formation of Spiritist Societies and the special difficulties connected with them.

(15) “Why do you not begin your sittings with a general invocation, a sort of appeal to the higher spheres, that may dispose your minds to serious thought? Without seriousness of thought and purpose, only frivolous communications will be obtained.

Good spirits come only to those who attract them by their fervor and sincerity; a fact which is not yet sufficiently comprehended in your world. We see your labors with pleasure, and are ready to aid you, but on condition that you second our action by the action of your wills, and that you show yourselves equal to the mission you are called upon to fulfill. Be united; you will thus be too strong for evil spirits to prevail against you. God approves the simpleminded; we do not mean simpletons, but those who make a voluntary abnegation of self; and who devote themselves to His service without vanity. If you would become a focus of light for all mankind, you

must learn to distinguish truth from error. Be careful to sow only good seed, unmixed with tares; for tares stifle the good seed and prevent it from growing up, and they who have sown them will be held responsible for the mischief done by them; in other words, you, who are called to spread the truth, will have to answer for the false doctrines you may have propagated. Let all mediums, therefore, pray to God unceasingly for assistance and guidance."

SAINT AUGUSTINE

(Saint Augustine, having been requested to dictate a general formula of evocation, replied as follows:)

"We cannot give you any fixed and absolute formula. God is too great to attach importance to *words*; He looks only to the *thought*. You must not suppose that the pronouncing of certain words can suffice to keep off evil spirits, or that there can be any virtue in verbal forms that are recited as a mere matter of habit. The efficacy of any prayer, whether clothed in impromptu language or in an accepted form, depends on the sincerity of the sentiment it expresses, and the unanimity of those by whom it is offered; no one whose heart is not in his prayer could profit by it, or make it profitable to others. Draw up a formula, if you will, and then submit it to me; and I will help you."

Remark – Acting upon the advice given, the following formula was accordingly drawn up, with the aid of Saint Augustine and other spirits; it has met with wide approval, and has been generally adopted for the opening of spiritist meetings:

"We pray Almighty God to send good spirits to assist us, to keep away those who might lead us Into error, and to give us the light we need for distinguishing truth from imposture. May all malevolent spirits who might create disunion among us be kept away; should any such obtain entrance here, we adjure them, in the name of God, to retire.

"Good spirits who preside over our labors, deign to come to us and instruct us!

Render us docile to your counsels, and aid us to subordinate all personal sentiments to the general weal.

"We especially request the spirit of our spirit-protector; to be with us and to give us his help."

(16) "My friends, let me give you a piece of advice, for you are on new ground. You have been told with truth that the aim of spiritism is to give a new sanction to morality, and that it must not overstep the limits of a philosophical system, under pain of becoming a mere matter of curiosity. Leave aside questions in relation to scientific subjects; our mission is not to answer such inquiries, thereby sparing you the trouble of research, but *to aid you to become better*, for *that* is the way in which you will really advance."

"SAINT LOUIS."

(17) “People have laughed at ‘table-turning;’ but they will never laugh at the philosophy, the wisdom, the charity, which shine forth in the communications given by spirits of high degree. Physical manifestations are *the vestibule* of spiritism, intended to enable you, on entering it, to lay aside your prejudices, as you lay aside your cloak. I cannot insist too strongly upon the duty of making of your meetings a serious centre for the obtaining of instructions in regard to truth and duty. Let those who would obtain physical manifestations seek for them, but elsewhere; *elsewhere let them see*; *elsewhere let them hear*; *but do you*, *here*, *seek after understanding and charity*. What do you suppose you are, in the eyes of the higher spirits, when you have made a table turn or rise from the ground? *Schoolboys*. Does a man pass his time in going again over the A B C of his subject? But when we see you united in the desire to obtain instructive communications, we look upon you as *men*, and as men who are seriously in search of truth.”

SAINT LOUIS

(To the inquiry addressed by us to Saint Louis as to whether, by the above remarks, he intended to disparage physical manifestations, he replied–)

“I could not intend to disparage physical manifestations, because they take place by God’s permission and for a useful purpose; but, in saying that they are *the vestibule of spiritism*, I assign to them their true place, and acknowledge their special utility. I blame only those who make, of physical manifestations, an object of amusement and curiosity, *an end* rather than *a means*; and who fail to draw from them the moral teachings which they are intended to enforce. They may be said to stand in the same relation to the *philosophy* of spiritism that *grammar* does to *literature*; he who has advanced in the latter does not lose his time in studying over again the elements of the former.”

(18) “My friends, I am always happy to direct you on the path by which alone you can advance; to do so is a mission that has been confided to me, in which I rejoice and of which I am proud, for *the power to be useful is always a reward*. Let the spirit of charity unite you; the charity which loves, as well as that which gives. Show yourselves patient under the ill-will of your detractors; be firm in the right; and, above all, be humble, for it is humility alone that elevates, because it constitutes the sole greatness recognized by the Most High. Only through your humility will you attract good spirits to you, and you must remember that, if good ones do not come to you, bad ones will take the place left vacant by them. Let your sole care be to stand well in the eyes of your Creator; you will grow in the favor of men, while seeking only to grow in that of God.”

SAINT LOUIS

(19) “Union is strength; be united, in order that you may be strong. If you would render yourselves invulnerable to the poisoned arrows of calumny and to the attacks of the dark phalanx of ignorant, selfish, and hypocritical spirits, you must let the flame of a sincere and noble friendship unite,

enlighten, and warm your hearts, and you will then be able to withstand the assaults of evil, as the rock withstands the fury of the waves."

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

(20) "My friends, you desire to form a Spiritist Society, and I approve of your doing so, for mediums should not remain isolated. This sublime gift has been given to them, not for themselves alone, but for the general good. By their intercourse with others, they are enabled to form a truer judgement in regard to the value of the communications they themselves receive; whereas, if they remain alone, they are more easily brought under the power of deceptive spirits, who are delighted at having no one to judge their statements. This is my advice to you in reference to mediums who unless they are swayed by pride, will understand and profit by it. And, now, in reference to other points.

"Do you really understand what a spiritist meeting should be? No; for, in your zeal, you think the best thing to be done is to bring together as many people as possible, in order to convince them. Undeceive yourselves; the fewer you are, the more valuable will be the results you will obtain. It is by your moral ascendency that you will bring the skeptic to your side, much more surely than by the exhibition of physical phenomena which people come to see from curiosity, and not only do not always believe, but often laugh at. On the other hand, if they find among you only people worthy of esteem, though they may perhaps not at once accept your belief, they will, at any rate, respect you; and *respect* always predisposes to *confidence*. You know that *the mission of spiritism is to bring about a moral reform of the human race*; let all spiritist societies, then, set an example of Christian virtue; and, in these days of selfishness, let such gatherings always offer the spectacle of friends united by a true and noble kindness."

FÉNÉLON

(21) "You ask whether a multiplicity of groups in the same locality might not engender rivalries injurious to spiritist doctrine? To this I reply that those who are imbued with the true principles of our doctrine regard all spiritists not as rivals but as brothers, and that none could be jealous of other societies unless influenced by self-love rather than by the love of truth. True spiritism has for its motto '*Good will and charity to all*' it excludes every species of rivalry excepting *emulation in doing right*. All the groups on whose banner this motto is inscribed can hold out a friendly hand to each other. Let your only rivalry be one of greatness of soul, of abnegation, kindness, and humility. He who should throw stones at another would prove himself to be under the dominion of evil spirits. *The nature of the sentiments manifested by two people towards each other is an unerring indication of the nature of the spirits who consort with them*."

FÉNÉLON

(22) "Silence and concentration of thought are conditions essential to the obtaining of serious communications, and no conversation should be carried on while spirits are being interrogated. You often receive communications

suggesting serious questions on your part, and requiring answers no less serious on the part of the spirits evoked; and, if the medium who is writing is disturbed by those about him, his psychic activity is impeded thereby, and his usefulness proportionally impaired."

SAINT LOUIS

(23) "Let me urge upon you the necessity of conducting your meetings with as much order as possible, so that you may avoid confusion and divergence of ideas, which furnish evil spirits with facilities for substituting themselves for the good ones, and for replying to the questions brought forward for consideration. When a meeting is composed of people unknown to each other, how is it possible for them to avoid contradictoriness of ideas, inattention, or indifference? I would fain discover some efficacious means of doing this. Possibly, it might be done by the concentration of fluids around the mediums. It is they alone, and especially those who are most beloved, who keep good spirits in the assembly; but their influence hardly suffices to repel the mob of foolish and fantastic ones who seek to find ingress. Examine carefully all the communications you receive; weigh well beforehand all the questions you propose to ask, and meditate no less thoughtfully on the answers you receive. Error is frequent, even on the part of well-intentioned spirits. The slowness of the operation of writing is wearisome to the spirit, who is apt to turn from a subject which, for him, is exhausted as soon as he has brought his thought to bear on it. His mobility and indifference to the ordinary conventionalisms of human life, and many other conditions of which you are already aware, make it your duty to accord only a limited confidence to the communications you receive, and to submit them all to the test of examination and reason, even when presenting the most satisfactory appearances of authenticity."

GEORGE (A FAMILIAR SPIRIT)

(24) "What is usually your object in endeavoring to obtain communications from spirits? Is it to get specimens of fine writing that you may show to your acquaintances as samples of our talent, and that you may preserve carefully in your albums, but that have no place in your hearts?

"Do you imagine that we consider it an honor to show ourselves off in your assemblies, and to contest with one another the palm of eloquence, in order that you may say: 'We have had a very interesting meeting?' How much do you retain, with a view to putting its teachings into practice, of communications that you have declared to be admirable? Do you suppose that we care for your applause? Be not deceived by any such notion. Our sole object is *to improve you morally*. Therefore, when we find that our words bear no fruit, that they excite only a sterile approbation, we seek out other souls who are more docile to our suggestions; and our places are then taken by spirits who desire nothing better than to mislead you, and who rarely fail to do so. You have therefore only yourselves to thank when you are deceived (See 268, *quests*. 19, 20)."

MASSILLON

(25) “Spiritism should be a preservative against discord and dissension, which can gain no entrance among those who understand and practice the law of charity. Be on your guard, all you who are animated by the love of truth, keep the doors of your hearts, that the enemy may not find a traitor among you. Dissensions can only be the work of evil spirits; therefore, let those among you who feel most strongly the duty prescribed by urbanity as well as by true spiritism, set an example of patience, dignity, and consistency. Good spirits may sometimes permit a contest to arise, in order to allow, to good as well as to evil sentiments, an opportunity of manifesting themselves, and to sift the wheat from the tares; but they will always be on the side of those who display the truest humility and the most genuine charity.”

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

(26) “Repel all spirits who counsel exclusiveness, division, isolation. Such spirits are always vain and shallow; they impose on the weak and credulous by exaggerated praises, in order to fascinate and to domineer over them. They are generally spirits who, having been public or private despots while on earth, still desire to have victims to tyrannize over after their death. As a general rule, distrust all communications of a mystic or fantastic character, as well as those which prescribe ceremonies or eccentricities.

“Absurdities and errors are best got rid of by submitting all spirit-statements to a critical examination. A medium may be fascinated, a group may be imposed upon; but a careful examination of communications, by other groups, with the aid of knowledge already acquired by them and the moral influence of their presidents, and their comparison with those obtained by their principal mediums from spirits of high advancement, will suffice to expose the false statements made, by malevolent or deceptive spirits, to individual mediums or to isolated groups.”

ERASTES (DISCIPLE OF SAINT PAUL)

Remark – Spirits who wish to make us accept unfounded theories usually pretend that, if we only agree with them, we shall be wiser than everybody else. They do their utmost to avoid the discussion of their theories; but, if worsted in argument, they disdainfully refuse to reply, and induce their mediums to keep away from the groups by whom their ideas are examined and criticized. Isolation is therefore especially dangerous for mediums, because it leaves them at the mercy of obsessives, who first blind them, and then, too often, lead them astray.

(27) “It is not among incarnates only that false prophets are to be found; they exist, and in far greater numbers, among the self-conceited spirits who, under the mask of love and charity, sow dissension, and retard the emancipation of the human race, by the absurd statements which they cause to be made through their mediums; assuming, in order the more effectually to fascinate and to mislead, names which command general veneration and respect, and even daring in some cases to call themselves by the name of God. But you have only to pass the theories of such spirits

through the sieve of reason and common sense, and you will see what remains of them! No spirit by whom puerile ideas and impracticable schemes, opposed to the simplest facts of science, are brought forward as truth, as the panacea for human ills, or as a means of suddenly transforming society, can be anything but an ignoramus or a liar.

"Truth is not always seen to be such by individuals, but it is always recognized by the common sense of the majority. If two statements clash, you can measure their relative value by ascertaining which of the two meets with the widest sympathy; for it would evidently be unreasonable to admit that a doctrine of which the partisans were diminishing could be nearer the truth than one of which the acceptance was steadily increasing. God wills that the light of truth shall reach all minds; He therefore does not shut it up in a narrow circle, but makes it shine forth in all directions, in order that darkness may be everywhere dissipated."

ERASTES

Remark – The best guarantee of the truth of any principle is its simultaneous inculcation in different places, by different spirits, through different mediums who are unknown to one another, and, above ail, its confirmation by reason, and by the Sanction of general acceptance. Truth alone can enable a doctrine to take root. Erroneous theories may certainly recruit adherents for a time, but, as they lack the primary condition of vitality, they can have only an ephemeral existence, and we therefore need not be disquieted about them. Error is killed by its own erroneousness, and will therefore inevitably disappear under the action of reason.

Apocryphal Communications

Spirit communications are sometimes so absurd, although signed by great names, that the simplest common sense suffices to detect their falsity; but there are others in which error, being mixed up with truth, is not detected at first sight, though it cannot fail to be perceived on further examination. We give a few specimens of communications of this character, in order to aid inquirers in judging of the communications which may be made to them, or which may come under their notice."

(28) "The perpetual and incessant creation of worlds is, for God, a perpetual pleasure, because He incessantly sees His rays become each day more luminous in happiness. Number does not exist for God any more than time. This is why, for Him, hundreds or millions are neither more nor less, in His sight, one than the other. He is a father whose happiness is formed of the collective happiness of His children; and, at each second of the creation, He finds a new happiness coming and melting into the general happiness. There is neither stoppage nor suspension in this perpetual movement, this great, incessant happiness, which renders fertile the earth and the heavens. As regards the earth, you know only a very small fraction of it, and you have brothers who live under latitudes that man has not yet been able to penetrate. What signify the horrifying heat and the mortal cold which stay

the efforts of the boldest? Do you believe, in your simplicity, that *there* is the limit of your world, when, with your small means, you can advance no further? You fancy you can measure your planet exactly, do you? Do not believe it. There are upon your planet more places that you are ignorant of than places that you know. But, since it is useless to propagate any further all your evil institutions, all your bad laws, actions, and lives, there is a limit which stops you here and there, and which will stop you until you are able to transport thither the good seed which your free will shall have made. No; you do not know this world which you call the earth. You will see, in your present existence, a great beginning of proofs of this communication. The hour is about to strike when there will be another discovery besides the last that has been already made, and that will enlarge the circle of your known earth; and when the press everywhere sings this Hosanna in all tongues, you, poor children who love God and seek His way, you will have known all about it, before the very people who will give their name to the new land."

VINCENT DE PAUL

Remark – In point of style, this communication, with its inaccuracies, redundancies, and eccentric terms of expression, is evidently very faulty; but these faults alone would prove nothing against its authenticity, because such imperfections might arise from the incapacity of the medium, as we have already shown. What the communicating spirit gives, is *the idea*; and therefore, when the author of this message tells us that there exist on our planet more places that we are ignorant of than places that are known, and that a new continent is about to be discovered, he gives indisputable proof of his ignorance. Certain tracts of land, as yet undiscovered, may very probably exist beyond the ice-barriers around the poles; but to say that those tracts are peopled, and that God has hidden them from us in order that we may not transport evil institutions thither, shows the folly of the spirit who could seek to palm off such absurdities on mortal listeners. Contrast the foregoing with the following, obtained in the same group and signed with the same name, but presenting as evident marks of authenticity as the foregoing presents of substitution.

(29) "Your material world and the spiritual world (which so few of you know as yet) form the two plates of a pair of scales. Your religions, your laws, your customs, and your passions, have caused the scale of evil so far to outweigh that of good, that evil has reigned as a sovereign over the earth. For ages, the same plaint has exhaled from the lips of man, and he has necessarily been led by suffering to call in question the justice of God, while some men have even been led to deny His very existence. You see the things of your world; but you see nothing of the spirit world, and you therefore cannot understand the conditions of your earthly life, in which you see superfluity jostling want, gold and clay in close proximity, the contrasts of vice and of virtue which should prove to you the fact of your double nature, but which you cannot explain. Where comes this state of things? Whose fault is it? This question you should try to answer with calmness and

impartiality, remembering that the sincere desire to find a remedy is the first step towards its discovery. Notwithstanding the domination of evil over good, which occurs through your own fault, do you not perceive that all the forces of Nature run steadily in the groove appointed for them by
God? Do you ever see the seasons coming out of their time, heat and cold clashing with each other? the sun forgetting to light up the earth? the earth forgetting the grain which man has deposited in its bosom? Is there any cessation of the countless miracles that are constantly taking place under your eyes, from the birth of the blade of grass to the birth of the child, the future man? All that is done by God is well done; all that is done by man is not well done. What is the remedy for all this? Something very simple. *Let men return to God*; *let them be united together*, *and follow the road which*, *to the eyes of faith and conscience is already marked out*."

VINCENT DE PAUL

Remark – This communication was obtained "as stated above" in the same circle as the preceding one; but what a difference is observable between them, not only in style, but also in thought! This one is clear, profound, sensible, and such as Vincent de Paul would not disavow; and we may therefore safely assume that it is from him.

(30) "Go forward, children! Close up your ranks! That is to say, union is strength.

You who are working at the foundations of this great edifice, watch and work to consolidate its base, and you will be enabled to raise it high, very high! Progress is immense throughout our globe; an innumerable crowd of proselytes are drawing round our *flag*; many skeptics, even of those who are most incredulous, are approaching; yes, they too are approaching!

"Go forward, children, march forward with elated hearts, full of faith; the road you follow is a beautiful one; do not slacken your pace; always follow the straight line; serve guides to those who are coming after you; they will be happy, very happy!

"March forward, children! You do not need the aid of bayonets to sustain your cause, all you want is faith. Belief fraternity, and union; these are your arms; with these you are strong, more powerful than all the great potentates of as the universe united, notwithstanding their armies, their fleets, their cannon, and their grapeshot!

"You who combat for the liberty of peoples and the regeneration of the great human family, come on, children! Courage and perseverance! God will aid you! Good night; I shall see you again."

NAPOLEON

Remark – If ever there were a grave and serious man, Napoleon, while living, was such an one; his brief, concise style of utterance is known to all, and he must have strangely degenerated since his death, if he could have dictated a communication so verbose and ridiculous as this, which, however, may perhaps be from the spirit of some trooper named "Napoleon."

(31) “No; one cannot ‘change one’s religion,’ when one does not possess a religion which can at the same time satisfy one’s common sense and intelligence, and which can, above all, give present consolation to man. No! One does not change one’s religion; what one does is to fall from folly and domination into wisdom and liberty. Come on, come on, our little army! come on, and do not fear the enemy’s bullets! Those which will kill you are not yet cast, if you are always, from the bottom of your heart, in the way of God; that is to say, if you will always combat, pacifically and victoriously, for ease and liberty.”

VINCENT DE PAUL

Remark – Who could recognize the excellent and beneficent man called Saint Vincent de Paul in language so loose and in thoughts so void of common sense, as the foregoing? What does the spirit mean by saying, “No, one does not ‘change one’s religion,’ ““one falls from folly and domination into wisdom and liberty?” With his “bullets which are not yet cast,” this spirit would seem to be the same as that of the trooper who signed *Napoleon* in the preceding communication.

In regard to the two following quotations, the absurdity of signing such messages with such a name, is too obvious to call for comment.

(32) “Children of my faith, Christians of my doctrine forgotten through the interests of the floods of the philosophy of the materialists, follow me on the road of Judea, follow the passion of my life, contemplate my enemies of the present, contemplate my sufferings, my torments, and my blood shed for my faith!

“Children, spiritualists of my new doctrine, be ready to stiffer, to brave the waves of adversity, the sarcasms of your enemies. Faith will march forward incessantly in following your star, which will guide you on the road to eternal happiness, as the star led the Magi of the East, by faith, to the Cradle. Whatever your adversaries may be, whatever your trials, whatever the tears that you have shed in this sphere of exile, take courage, be sure that the joy which will overwhelm you in the world of spirits will be far above the torments of your passing existence. The valley of tears is a valley which must disappear to give place to the brilliant sojourn of joy, of fraternity and union, which you will reach through your dutiful obedience to the holy revelation. This life, my dear brothers of this terrestrial sphere, merely preparatory though it be, can only endure for the time necessary for living well prepared for that life which can never end.

Love one another, love one another as I have loved you, and as I love you still; brothers, Courage, brothers l I bless you; in heaven I await you.”

JESUS

“From these brilliant and luminous regions which human thought can scarcely penetrate, the echo of your words and of mine has come to me and touched my heart.

“Oh! With what joy do I feel inundated by the sight of you, you, the continuers of my doctrine! No, nothing approaches the testimony of your

good thoughts! You see it, my children, the regenerating idea cast by me long since into the world, persecuted, stayed, for a moment, by the oppression of tyrants, is going on now without obstacles, lighting the ways of humanity so long plunged in darkness.

“Every great and disinterested sacrifice, my children, has borne fruit sooner or later. My martyrdom proved this to you; my blood poured out for my doctrine will save humanity and efface the faults of great criminals!

“Blessed be ye, ye who this day take your place in the regenerated family! Go forward, courage, children!”

JESUS

Remark – There is certainly nothing evil in these two communications; but did Christ ever express Himself in such an awkward, pretentious, stilted, and ridiculous style?

All the communications now quoted as apocryphal were obtained in the same circle. We notice in them a sort of family-likeness, similar turns of phraseology, the frequent repetition of the same expressions, such as, for example, “Go forward, children!” etc. from which we may conclude that the same spirit probably dictated them all, under different names. It is to be remarked that in the circle alluded to – and which was a very conscientious one, though somewhat too credulous – they never made evocations nor asked questions, hot waited for communications to be made spontaneously; yet we see that their doing so did not suffice to ensure the authenticity of the messages received by them. A series of home-questions would have put this spirit into his proper place; but, as they asked him nothing, and accepted, blindly and unhesitatingly, everything he said, he knew that he had nothing to fear, and seems to have amused himself accordingly by playing on their credulity.

(33) “How beautiful is nature! How prudent is Providence in its foresight! But your blindness and your human passions hinder your having patience with the prudence and goodness of God. You lament over the smallest cloud, the least delay in the realization of your previsions; know then, impatient doubters, that nothing happens without a motive that is always foreseen, always premeditated, for the profit of all. The meaning of what precedes is to set at naught men of false apprehensions, all your previsions of a bad year for your harvests.

“God frequently inspires men with uneasiness about the future, to urge them to foresight; see how great are the means for exciting your fears, sown designedly, and which, most frequently, cover avaricious thoughts rather than the idea of a wise provisioning inspired by a feeling of humanity for the advantage of the poor. Behold the relations of nations with nations that will grow out of your uneasiness; see the transactions to which it will lead; what methods will work together to disappoint your fears for, as you know, every thing is linked together, and great and small will cooperate in the work.

“And do you not already see, in the whole of this movement, a source of well-being for the more laborious class of society, that truly interesting

class which you, the great, you, the omnipotent of this earth, regard as people to be taxed at your pleasure, created for your satisfaction?
“And what comes of all this going and coming from one pole to the other? It is that, once well provided for, the weather has often changed; the sun, obeying the thought of its Creator, ripens your harvest in a few days; God brings abundance where your covetousness meditated a lack, and in spite of you the humble can live; and, without your suspecting it, you have been, unknown to yourselves, the cause of abundance.
“Nevertheless it happens – God permits this sometimes – that the evil ones succeed in their avaricious projects; but then it is a teaching that God wills to give to all; it is human foresight that He would stimulate; it is that infinite order which reigns in nature, it is courage in view of events, which men should imitate, and should bear with resignation.
“As to those who, calculatingly, profit by disasters, you may be sure that they will be punished for it. God wills that all His creatures should live; man should neither tamper with necessity nor make a traffic of superfluity just in His benefits, great in His clemency, too good for our ingratitude, God is impenetrable in His designs.”

BOSSUET ALFRED DE MARIGNAC

Remark – This communication assuredly contains nothing objectionable; on the contrary, notwithstanding its defects of style, it contains profound and philosophical ideas, and sagacious advice, which might deceive illiterate readers in regard to the identity of its author. The medium who obtained it, having submitted it to the examination of the Spiritist Society of Paris, the latter declared unanimously that it could not be the production of Bossuet. Saint Louis, on being consulted respecting this communication, gave the following answer: “This communication is intrinsically good, but you must not believe that it came from Bossuet. The spirit who dictated it may perhaps have done so, in some degree, under the inspiration of the great Bishop, and may have put the Bishop’s name at the end of it, in order to get it more readily accepted; but you can easily detect the substitution of signature by the defectiveness of the language. It was dictated by the spirit who has placed his name after that of Bossuet.” This spirit, being interrogated as to his motive in attempting such a fraud, replied: “I was anxious to write something to bring myself hack to the notice of men; seeing that my communication was but weak, I borrowed a great name to give it weigh.” – “But did you not foresee that it would be judged to be spurious?” – “Who can ever be sure as to what will happen? You might have been taken in. Other people, less clear-sighted, would have accepted it as coming from Bossuet.”
It is, in fact, the readiness with which many people accept whatever comes from the invisible world, under the apparent sanction of a great name, that encourages deceptive spirits. We must employ our acumen to frustrate the tricks of such spirits; and this is only to be done with the aid of experience and a serious study of the subject.

It is for this reason that we constantly repeat our advice to study the subject before attempting experimentation; for it is only thus that inquirers can avoid acquiring experience at the cost of mystifications and annoyance.

CHAPTER 32

Spirit Glossary

AGENERATE (from the Greek primitive *a*, and *géine*, *géinomai*, to engender; that which has not been engendered). – This term expresses a variety of tangible apparitions; the state of certain spirits who can momentarily assume the form of a living person, so as to produce a complete illusion.

CLAIRAUDIENCE – Ability to hear things or perceive sound psychically not audible within normal hearing ranges. This is an example of extrasensory perception.

CLAIRVOYANT – Ability to see mentally without using the eyes, beyond ordinary time and space limits; also called "Second Sight."

ERRATICITY – The state of errant or wandering spirits; that is to say, of such as are not incarnate; the state of a spirit during the intervals between two successive corporeal existences.

EVOCATION – The act of *evoking* or *calling* the spirit or spirits with whom we desire to enter into communication, as distinguished from *invocation*, which is the act of addressing ourselves to a spirit or spirits for help or assistance.

MEDIUMISTIC (from the Latin words *medium* (see below), and *anima*, soul).

Appertaining to the special ability or action of intermediacy between souls in flesh and souls in the spirit-world. We say "A psychic communication." "Possession of psychic ability sometimes constitutes a medium."

(Intermediary) – A person who serves as a go-between, or intermediary, between the souls of spirits and of men.

MEDIUMSHIP – The exercise of psychic ability. The calling, work, mission, or action, of a medium.

PERISPIRIT (from the Greek *peri* roundabout, and the Latin *spiritus*, breath, spirit) – The semi-material envelope of the soul. During incarnation, it serves as the link or intermediary between the incarnated spirit and the matter of his fleshly body; during erraticity, it constitutes the spirit's fluidic body, inseparable from the personality of the spirit.

PNEUMATOGRAPHY (from the Greek *pneuma*, air, breath, wind, spirit, and *grapho*, I write) – This word denotes the direct writing of spirits, without the use of the medium's hand.

PSYCHOGRAPHER (from the Greek *psuké* butterfly, soul, and *grapho*, I write) – A person who writes by psychography; a writing medium.

PSYCHOGRAPHY – The writing of spirits by a medium's hand.

PSYCHOPHONY – The communication of spirits by the voice of a trance medium.

REINCARNATION – The return of a spirit to corporeal life; plurality of existences, in this planet and in other material worlds.

SEMATOLOGY (from the Greek *sema*, a sign, and *logos*, a discourse) – The language of signs. The communications of spirits by the movements of inert bodies.

SPIRIT – According to the spiritist theory, *spirits are the intelligent beings of the creation*; *they people the universe beyond the limits of the visible world, and constitute the population of the invisible world*; they are the souls of men who have lived upon the earth, or in other globes, and who have left their corporeal envelope.

SPIRIT-RAPPERS – A class of spirits who reveal their presence and their quality by raps and noises of different kinds.

SPIRITIST – That which has to do with spiritism; a partisan of spiritism; one who believes in the fact of spirit-manifestations.

SPIRITUALISM – The opposite of materialism; a belief in the existence of the spiritual and immaterial soul. We say, *Spiritualism is the basis of all religions*.

SPIRITUALIST – One who occupies himself with spiritualism; a partisan of spiritualism. Whoever believes that there is in the universe something which is not matter is a *spiritualist*, but spiritualism does not necessarily imply a belief in the manifestations of spirits. Every *spiritist* is necessarily a *spiritualist*, but every *spiritualist* is not necessarily a *spiritist*; the *materialist* is neither the one nor the other.

We say, "the *spiritualist* philosophy," as the antithesis of "theoretic materialism;" "A work embodying *spiritualist* ideas," as the opposite of "a work embodying materialistic ideas." We say, "*Spiritist* manifestations are produced by the action of spirits on matter;" "*spiritist* morality is the result of teachings given by spirits." "There are spiritualists who ridicule the *spiritist* belief."

In these examples, the employment of the word *spiritualist* for *spiritist* would produce confusion.

TRANCE – A temporary state in which a medium, with suspension of personal consciousness, is controlled by an intelligence from without and used as a means of communication, as from the dead.

TYPTER (from the Greek *tupto*, I strike) – One who has the power of producing typtology; a rapping or tipping medium.

TYPTOLOGY – Language of raps or tilts; a mode of spirit-communication. *Alphabetical typtology*; the designation of letters (or cyphers) by raps or tilting.

Paperbacks also available from White Crow Books

Marcus Aurelius—*Meditations*
ISBN 978-1-907355-20-2
Elsa Barker—Letters from a Living Dead Man
ISBN 978-1-907355-83-7
Elsa Barker—War Letters from the Living Dead Man
ISBN 978-1-907355-85-1
Elsa Barker—Last Letters from the Living Dead Man
ISBN 978-1-907355-87-5
Richard Maurice Bucke—*Cosmic Consciousness*
ISBN 978-1-907355-10-3
G. K. Chesterton—The Everlasting Man
ISBN 978-1-907355-03-5
G. K. Chesterton—*Heretics*
ISBN 978-1-907355-02-8
G. K. Chesterton—*Orthodoxy*
ISBN 978-1-907355-01-1
Arthur Conan Doyle—The Edge of the Unknown
ISBN978-1-907355-14-1
Arthur Conan Doyle—*The New Revelation*
ISBN 978-1-907355-12-7
Arthur Conan Doyle—*The Vital Message*
ISBN 978-1-907355-13-4
Arthur Conan Doyle with Simon Parke—Conversations with Arthur Conan Doyle
ISBN 978-I-907355-80-6
Leon Denis with Arthur Conan Doyle—*The Mystery of Joan of Arc*
ISBN 978-1-907355-17-2
The Earl of Dunraven—Experiences in Spiritualism with D. D. Home
ISBN 978-1-907355-93-6
Meister Eckhart with Simon Parke— *Conversations with Meister Eckhart*
ISBN 978-1-907355-18-9
Kahlil Gibran—*The Forerunner*
ISBN 978-I-907355-06-6
Kahlil Gibran—*The Madman*
ISBN 978-1-907355-05-9
Kahlil Gibran—*The Prophet*
ISBN 978-1-907355-04-2
Kahlil Gibran—*Sand and Foam*
ISBN 978-1-907355-07-3
Kahlil Gibran—Jesus the Son of Man
ISBN 978-1-907355-08-0
Kahlil Gibran—Spiritual World

ISBN 978-1-907355-09-7
Hermann Hesse—*Siddhartha*
ISBN 978-1-907355-31-8
D. D. Home—Incidents in my Life Part 1
ISBN 978-1-907355-15-8
Mme. Dunglas Home; edited, with an Introduction, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—*D. D. Home: His Life and Mission*
ISBN 978-1-907355-16-5
Edward C. Randall—Frontiers of the Afterlife
ISBN 978-1-907355-30-1
Lucius Annaeus Seneca—*On Benefits*
ISBN 978-1-907355-19-6
Rebecca Ruter Springer—Intra Muros: My Dream of Heaven
ISBN 978-1-907355-11-O
W. T. Stead—After Death or Letters from Julia: A Personal Narrative
ISBN 978-1-907355-89-9
Leo Tolstoy, edited by Simon Parke— *Forbidden Words*
ISBN 978-1-907355-00-4
Leo Tolstoy—*A Confession*
ISBN 978-1-907355-24-0
Leo Tolstoy—The Gospel in Brief
ISBN 978-1-907355-22-6
Leo Tolstoy—The Kingdom of God is Within You
ISBN 978-1-907355-27-1
Leo Tolstoy—My Religion: What I Believe
ISBN 978-1-907355-91-2
Leo Tolstoy—*On Life*
ISBN 978-1-907355-91-2
Leo Tolstoy—Twenty-three Tales
ISBN 978-1-907355-29-5
Leo Tolstoy—What is Religion and other writings
ISBN 978-1-907355-28-8
Leo Tolstoy—Work While Ye Have the Light
ISBN 978-1-907355-26-4
Leo Tolstoy with Simon Parke— *Conversations with Tolstoy*
ISBN 978-1-907355-25-7
Vincent Van Gogh with Simon Parke—*Conversations with Van Gogh*
ISBN 978-1-907355-95-0
Howard Williams with an Introduction by Leo Tolstoy—The Ethics of Diet: An Anthology of Vegetarian Thought
ISBN 978-1-907355-21-9
Allan Kardec—The Spirits Book
ISBN 978-1-907355-98-1
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart with Simon Parke—*Conversations with Mozart*
ISBN 978-1-907661-38-9

Jesus of Nazareth with Simon Parke—Conversations with Jesus of Nazareth
ISBN 978-1-907661-41-9
Rudolf Steiner—Christianity as a Mystical Fact: And the Mysteries of Antiquity
ISBN 978-1-907661-52-5
Thomas à Kempis with Simon Parke—*The Imitation of Christ*
ISBN 978-1-907661-58-7
Emanuel Swedenborg—*Heaven and Hell*
ISBN 978-1-907661-55-6
P.D. Ouspensky—Tertium Organum: The Third Canon of Thought
ISBN 978-1-907661-47-1
Dwight Goddard—A Buddhist Bible
ISBN 978-1-907661-44-0
Leo Tolstoy—The Death of Ivan Ilyich
ISBN 978-1-907661-10-5
Leo Tolstoy—*Resurrection*
ISBN 978-1-907661-09-9

All titles available as eBooks, and selected titles available in Hardback and Audiobook formats from www.whitecrowbooks.com